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A HISTORY OF CRITICISM

AND LITERARY TASTE

Ignorantium temeraria plerumque sunt judicia.

—POLYCARP LEYSER.

A HISTORY OF CRITICISM

AND

LITERARY TASTE IN EUROPE

FROM THE EARLIEST TEXTS TO THE PRESENT DAY

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BY

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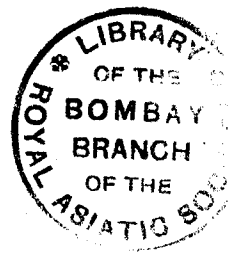

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

FROM THE RENAISSANCE TO THE DECLINE OF EIGHTEENTH CENTURY ORTHODOXY

N.N. t - 15

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MCMII

1911

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PREFACE.

In presenting the second volume of this attempt, I feel no compunction, and offer no apology, for what may seem to some the surprisingly large space given to English critics. That the book itself is intended primarily for English readers would be but a poor-spirited plea; and the greatness of English literature as a whole, though a worthier, is still an unnecessary argument. For the fact is, that the positive value and importance of English criticism itself are far greater than has been usually allowed. Owing very mainly to the not unintelligible or inexcusable, but unfortunate, initiative of Mr Matthew Arnold, it has become a fashion to speak of this branch of our national literature, if not even of the function of the national genius which it expresses, with bated breath, and with humble acknowledgment of the superiority of German, and still more of French, critics. This superiority, I say without the slightest fear, is a fond thing vainly invented. English criticism was rather late, and for a long time rather intermittent; nor did it fail, after the manner of the nation, to derive fresh impulses and new departures in the sixteenth century from Italian, in the seventeenth and again in the nineteenth century from French, and at the end of the eighteenth from German. But it is not true that in so much as one of these cases it was contented slavishly to imitate; and it is not true that, with the doubtful exception

of Sainte-Beuve, foreign countries have had any critics greater than our own, while they have, even put together, hardly so many great ones. In everything but mere superficial consistency Dryden is a head and shoulders above Boileau as a critic; Coleridge a head, shoulders, and body above the Schlegels, whom he followed. Long before Sainte-Beuve, Hazlitt had shown a genius for real criticism, as distinguished from barren formula-making, which no critic has surpassed. And Mr Arnold himself, with less range, equity, and sureness than Sainte-Beuve, has a finer literary taste and touch. As for that *general* superiority of French criticism of which we have heard so much, the unerring voice of actual history will tell us that it never existed at all, except, perhaps, for a generation before 1660, and a generation before 1860, the latter being the period which called forth, but misled, Mr Arnold's admiration. With this last we do not here deal; nor with the Romantic revolt, in dealing with which it will be pertinent to appraise the relative excellence of Lessing and Goethe as compared with Coleridge and Hazlitt. But we have within our present range an almost better field of comparison, in that "neo-classic" period from Boileau to La Harpe, and from Dryden to Johnson, in which, on the whole, and taking recognised orthodoxy only, the critics of France and of England worshipped the same idols, subscribed the same confessions of faith, and to no small extent even applied their principles to the same texts and subjects. I am, after careful examination, certain myself, and I hope that the results of that examination may make it clear to others, that they did *not* "order these things better in France," that they did not order them nearly so well.

The subject of this volume has more unity than that of the last; and I have thought it permissible to avail myself of this fact in the arrangement of the Interchapters. The whole of so-called Classical or Neo-classic Criticism is so intimately connected that almost any of its characteristic documents from Vida to La Harpe might be made the text of a sermon on the

entire phenomenon in its complete development. And in the same way, though with an opposite effect, all general comment might, without any grave historical or logical impropriety, have been postponed to the end of the volume. But this would, in the first place, have broken the uniformity of the book; in the second, it would have necessitated a final Interchapter (or "inter-conclusion") of portentous and disproportionate length; and in the third, it would have too long withheld from the reader those resting-places and intermediate views, as from various stations on Pisgah, which seem to me to be the great advantages and conveniences of the arrangement. I have therefore, while keeping the historical character and distribution of the summaries of the three centuries which happen pretty accurately to coincide with the three stages of the whole phase, made the logical gist of the first to concern chiefly the rise of the classical-critical attitude; of the second that constituted creed or code which was explicitly assented to, or implicitly accepted, by the entire period except in the case of rebels; while in the third I have concentrated criticism of this criticism as a whole. The three Interchapters are thus in manner consecutive and interdependent; but they will, I hope, serve not less to connect and illuminate the contents of the several books and of the whole volume than to conduct the story and the argument of the entire work duly from the beginning to the end of the appointed stage. They are perhaps specially important here because of the mass and number of minor figures with whom I have had to deal. I know that some excellent judges dislike this *numerus* and would have attention concentrated on the chiefs. But that is not my conception of literary history.

After full consideration of the matter, I have thought it better not to attempt any comment on criticisms of the first volume of this *History of Criticism*. I am much indebted to many of my critics, and perhaps I may be permitted to say that I was not a little surprised, and, to speak as a fool, very much pleased, by the generally favourable reception given to, rather

than deserved by, an undoubtedly audacious undertaking. In cases where those critics obliged me with a substantive correction (as, for instance, in that relating to Trissino's version of the *De Vulgari Eloquio*, v. *infra*, p. 40), I have taken opportunity, wherever it was possible, to acknowledge the obligation, and I subjoin some *corrigenda* and *addenda* in a flyleaf. But beyond this I do not think it desirable to go. In the case of merely snarling or carping censure, the conduct of Johnson as regards Kenrick gives the absolute precedent, even for those who have to acknowledge how far nearer their censors have come to Kenrick than they themselves can ever hope to come to Johnson. To those who pronounce a task impossible the best answer is to go and do it; to those who object to style and manner one may once more plead those disabilities of *la plus belle fille de France* which attach also to those who are neither French, nor girls, nor beautiful; for those who hate jokes and literary allusions one can only pray, "God help them!" And in the case of *bona fide* misunderstanding the wisest thing for an author to do is to make his meaning plainer, if he can, in the rest of his book.

It would probably be still more idle to attempt to anticipate strictures on the present volume. That its subject might advantageously have been dealt with in twice or thrice the space is obvious, and perhaps I may say without impropriety that the writer could have so treated it with no additional labour except the mere writing—for the preparation necessitated would have sufficed for half-a-dozen volumes. But to keep proportion, and observe the plan, is one of those critical warnings to which Classic and Romantic alike had much better attend. In the division which I have adopted of eighteenth-century writers into those who, as adherents of Neo-Classicism, are to be treated here, and those who, as forerunners or actual exponents of Modern Criticism, are to be reserved for our next, there must necessarily be much which invites cavil, and not a little which excuses objection. I shall only say that the dis-

tribution has not been made hastily; and that it may be possible to make its principle clearer when the reserved writers have been treated. The advantage of keeping the subject of the volume as homogeneous as possible seemed paramount.

In writing Vol. I. it was possible, with rare exceptions, to rely upon texts in my own possession. This has, of course, here been impossible: though I possess a fair collection of the Italians of the Renaissance, while I have long had many of the French and English writers of the whole time. For the supply of deficiencies I have not only to make the usual acknowledgment to the authorities of the British Museum—than which surely no institution ever better deserved the patronage of its name-giving goddesses—but also to thank those of the libraries belonging to the Faculty of Advocates and the Society of Writers to the Signet in Edinburgh, which bodies admit others besides their own members with remarkable liberality. In the library of the University of Edinburgh I suppose I may consider myself at home; but I owe cordial thanks to Bodley's Librarian, to the University Librarian at Cambridge, and to the librarian of the John Rylands collection at Manchester, for information about books which I have been unable to find elsewhere. There are one or two mentioned in the notes which I have not been able to get hold of yet; and I shall be extremely obliged to any reader of this history who may happen to know their whereabouts, and will take the trouble to tell me of it.

I am only the Satan of this journey across Chaos, and I daresay I have been driven out of the best course by the impact of more than one nitrous cloud. In other words, I not merely daresay, but am pretty sure, that I have made some blunders, especially in summary of readings not always controllable by reference to the actual books when the matter came before me again in print. And I daresay, further, that these will be obvious enough to specialists. I have found some such blunders even in the first volume, where the literature of the subject was far less extensive and, even in proportion to its extent, far more

accessible; and I have thought it best to include corrections of some of these in the present volume, in order that those who already possess the first may not be in an inferior position to those who acquire the new edition of it which is, or will shortly be, ready. When the work reaches its close (if it ever does so) will be the proper time to digest and incorporate these alterations as Fortune may allow. The kindness of Professor Elton, King Alfred Professor of English in University College, Liverpool, of Professor Ker *iterum*, and of my colleague Mr Gregory Smith, has beyond all doubt enabled me to forestall some part of these corrections in regard to the present volume. These friends were obliging enough to undertake between them the reading of the whole; others have assisted me on particular points, in regard to most of which I have, I think, made due acknowledgment in the notes. As before, I have taken some trouble with the Index, and I hope it may be found useful.

GEORGE SAINTSBURY.

EDINBURGH, *September* 1902.

ADDENDA AND CORRIGENDA TO VOL. I.

P.

31, l. 3 from bottom, *for* "written" *read* "other."

36, l. 14, *for* "if he had" *read* "had he had."

42. Attempts have been made to confine Aristotle's slighting remarks on *lexis* to mere "delivery." It is true that in the whole passage there is a certain confusion of the different senses of "elocution." But in this sentence Aristotle has just said, *τὸ περὶ τὴν λέξιν not ὑπόκρισιν*—that is to say, has covered the entire ground which he is going to discuss. Even if *φορτικὸν* be violently restricted, by the help of *καὶ* before *τό*, to *ὑποκριτικὴ* (which occurs further back), the general drift will remain.

64, l. 14, Accent of *Ὕψους* tilted wrong way.

87, last line, *for* "theme" *read* "the man."

91, notes, col. 2, l. 2, *for* "it" *read* "them."

110, l. 10 from bottom, *insert* "is" *between* "community" *and* "more."

243, notes, col. 2, last line, *for* "Ludebria" *read* "Ludibria," *and* "excitando" *for* "excitande."

327. In the passage about Pindar I feel that my paraphrase may mislead those who do not know the original. It is Virgil who "out-pindars Pindar" in "insolence and tumidity."

333. It is not perhaps sufficiently explained here that the Macrobian criticism on Etna is the same as the Gellian, *plus* an introductory sentence, and with a few alterations. But the objection to *eructari*, which is *in* the Greek, comes particularly ill *from* a Greek.

398, l. 15. "Toledo" is, of course, a slip for "Granada."

439, l. 14, *for* "But" *read* "Yet."

446. *Add note to chapter on Dante:* The same very helpful critic who, in the *Athenæum*, called my attention to a slip, or awkwardness of expression, as to Trissino's version of the *De Vulgari* (*v.* p. 40 of this vol.) desiderated notice of the *Purgatorio*, xxiv. 52-62 and xxvi. 112-126. The first contains the remarkable reference by Bonagiunta of Lucca to the *dolce stil nuovo* of Dante himself, and its inspiration by Love, ending with the very difficult lines, 61, 62—

> "E qual più a guardar (?) oltre si mette
> Non vede più dall' uno all' altro stilo,"—

where there are half-a-dozen different readings (and more conjectures) for *più a guardar*, &c. Such a *crux* is rather for the commentator on Dante. But taking the general drift, I think it possible to connect the lines with Quintilian's story of Julius Florus (*v.* vol. i. p. 313) and his question, "Do you want to write better than you can?" The poet who will not submit to the inspiration of Love or what not, but tries to "go beyond" it, to "write better than he can," will never come to finished execution. Still, I do not insist on this; and of course I do not mean that Dante thought of Quintilian. As for the other passage, in which Guido Guinicelli acknowledges Dante's admiration of himself, and commends (introducing him) Arnaut Daniel above other Provençal poets, it is certainly an interesting piece of contemporary "appreciation," and should have been mentioned as such.

CONTENTS.

BOOK IV.

RENAISSANCE CRITICISM

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY—ERASMUS.

	PAGE		PAGE
The Critical starting-point of the Renaissance	3	Not necessarily anti-mediæval	8
Influences at work: General	4	But classical	9
Particular	5	And anti-Puritan	9
Weakness of Vernaculars	6	Erasmus	10
Recovery of Ancient Criticism	6	The *Ciceronianus*	11
Necessity of defence against Puritanism	7	The *Colloquies*	13
The line of criticism resultant	7	The *Letters*	15
		Distribution of the Book	17

CHAPTER II.

EARLY ITALIAN CRITICS.

The beginnings	19	And danger	26
Savonarola	20	Petrus Crinitus: his *De Poetis Latinis*	27
Pico, &c.	22	Augustinus Olmucensis: his *Defençe of Poetry*	27
Politian	23	Paradoxical attacks on it by Cornelius Agrippa, Landi, Berni	28
The *Manto*	24	Vida	29
The *Ambra* and *Rusticus*	25		
The *Nutricia*	25		
Their merits	26		

Importance of the *Poetics* . . 30
Analysis of the piece . . . 30
Essential poverty of its theory . 34
Historical and symptomatic significance 34
The alleged appeal to reason and Nature 35
The main stream started . . 37
Trissino 38
Division of his *Poetic* . . . 39
His critical value 40
Editors, &c., of the *Poetics* . . 41
Pazzi 41
Robortello, Segni, Maggi, Vettori . 42
Theorists: Daniello . . . 42
Fracastoro 44
Formalists: Mutio. Tolomei and classical metres 46
Others: Tomitano, Lionardi, B. Tasso, Capriano 47
Il Lasca 48
Bembo 49
Caro 49
Varchi 49
Minturno 51
The *De Poeta* 52
The *Arte Poetica* 55
Their value 57
Giraldi Cinthio's *Discorsi* . . 58
On Romance 58
On Drama 59
Some points in both . . . 59
On Satire 61
Pigna 62
Lilius Giraldus: his *De Poetis Nostrorum Temporum* . . . 63
Its width of range 64
But narrowness of view . . . 64
Horror at preference of vernacular to Latin 64
Yet a real critic in both kinds . 65
Short *précis* of the dialogues . . 66
Their great historic value . . 6

CHAPTER III.

SCALIGER, CASTELVETRO, AND THE LATER ITALIAN CRITICS OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

Julius Cæsar Scaliger . . . 69
The *Poetic* 70
Book I.: *Historicus* . . . 71
Book II.: *Hyle* 72
Books III. and IV.: *Idea* and *Parasceve* 73
Books V. and VI.: *Criticus* and *Hypercriticus* 73
Book VII.: *Epinomis* . . . 75
General ideas on Unity and the like 76
His Virgil-worship 77
His solid merits 78
Castelvetro 80
The Opere Varie 81
The *Poetica* 82
On Dramatic conditions . . . 83
On the Three Unities . . . 83
On the freedom of Epic . . . 84
His eccentric acuteness . . . 84
Examples: Homer's nodding, prose in tragedy, Virgil, minor poetry . 86
The medium and end of Poetry . 86
Uncompromising championship of Delight 87
His exceptional interest and importance 88
Tasso and the controversies over the *Gerusalemme* 89
Tasso's Critical writings . . . 92
And position 93
Patrizzi: his *Poetica* . . . 94
The *Deca Istoriale* 95
The *Deca Disputata* . . . 96
The *Trimerone* on Tasso . . . 100
Remarkable position of Patrizzi . 101
Sed contra mundum 101
The latest group of sixteenth-century Critics 102
Partenio 102
Viperano 103
Piccolomini 103
Gilio 104
Mazzoni 105
Denores 106
Zinano 107
Mazzone da Miglionico, &c. . . 107
Summo 108

CHAPTER IV.

THE CRITICISM OF THE *PLÉIADE*.

The *Rhetorics* of the Transition . . 109
Sibilet 111
Du Bellay 112
The *Défense et Illustration de la Langue Française* . . . 113
Its positive gospel and the value thereof 114
The *Quintil Horatien* 116
Pelletier's *Art Poétique* 117
Ronsard: his general importance . 119
The *Abrégé de l'Art Poétique* . . 120
The *Prefaces to the Franciade* . 122
His critical gospel 125
Some minors 127
Pierre de Laudun 127
Vauquelin de la Fresnaye . . . 128
Analysis of his *Art Poétique* . . 129
The First Book 130
The Second 130
The Third 132
His exposition of *Pléiade* criticism . 133
Outliers: Tory, Fauchet, &c. . . . 134
Pasquier: The *Recherches* . . 135
His knowledge of older French literature 136
And criticism of contemporary French poetry 137
Montaigne: his references to literature 138
The Essay *On Books* 140

CHAPTER V.

ELIZABETHAN CRITICISM.

Backwardness of English Criticism not implying inferiority . . 144
Its cause 145
The influence of Rhetoric and other matters 146
Hawes 146
The first Tudor critics 147
Wilson: his *Art of Rhetoric* . . 149
His attack on "Inkhorn terms" . 149
His dealing with Figures . . . 150
Cheke: his resolute Anglicism and anti-preciosity 151
His criticism of Sallust 152
Ascham 153
His patriotism 154
His horror of Romance 154
And of the *Morte d'Arthur* . . 155
His general critical attitude to Prose 156
And to Poetry 156
The craze for Classical Metres . 157
Special wants of English Prosody . 157
Its kinds—
(1) Chaucerian 158
(2) Alliterative 158
(3) Italianated 159
Deficiencies of all three 159
The temptations of Criticism in this respect 160
Its adventurers: Ascham himself . 160
Watson and Drant 161
Gascoigne 162
His *Notes of Instruction* . . 163
Their capital value 164
Spenser and Harvey 165
The Puritan attack on Poetry . 169
Gosson 169
The School of Abuse 170
Lodge's *Reply* 170
Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* . . 171
Abstract of it 172
Its minor shortcomings 174
And major heresies 175
The excuses of both 175
And their ample compensation . 176
King James's *Reulis and Cautelis* . 176
Webbe's *Discourse* 178
Slight in knowledge 179
But enthusiastic 180
If uncritical 180
In appreciation 182
Puttenham's (?) *Art of English Poesie* 182

Its erudition 183
Systematic arrangement . . . 184
And exuberant indulgence in Figures 185
Minors: Harington, Meres, Webster, Bolton, &c. 186
Campion and his *Observations* . 187
Daniel and his *Defence of Rhyme* . 189
Bacon 191
The *Essays* 192
The *Advancement of Learning* . 192
Its denunciation of mere word-study 193
Its view of Poetry 194
Some *obiter dicta* 194
The whole of very slight importance 195
Stirling's *Anacrisis* 196
Ben Jonson: his equipment . . 197
His *Prefaces*, &c. 198
The Drummond Conversations . 199
The *Discoveries* 200
Form of the book 203
Its date 204
Mosaic of old and new . . . 204
The fling at Montaigne . . . 205
At *Tamerlane* 206
The Shakespeare Passage . . 206
And that on Bacon 206
General character of the book . 208

INTERCHAPTER IV. 211

BOOK V.

THE CRYSTALLISING OF THE NEO-CLASSIC CREED.

CHAPTER I.

FROM MALHERBE TO BOILEAU.

The supplanting of Italy by France 240
Brilliancy of the French representatives 241
Malherbe 242
The *Commentary on Desportes* . 244
What can be said for his criticism . 246
Its defects stigmatised at once by Regnier 247
His *Ninth Satire* 247
The contrast of the two a lasting one 249
The diffusion of seventeenth century criticism 250
Vaugelas 251
Balzac 252
His Letters 252
His critical Dissertations . . 253
Ogier and the Preface to *Tyr et Sidon* 254
Chapelain: the hopelessness of his verse 257
The interest of his criticism . . 257
The *Sentiments de l'Académie sur le Cid* 258
Prefaces 259
Sur les Vieux Romans 260
Letters, &c. 261
Corneille 261
The Three *Discourses* . . . 263
The *Examens* 263
La Mesnardière—Sarrasin—Scudéry 264
Mambrun 266
Saint-Evremond 268
His critical quality and accomplishment 269
His views on Corneille . . . 270
On Christian subjects, &c. . . 270
On Ancients and Moderns . . 270
Gui Patin—his judgment of Browne 272
Tallemant, Pellisson, Ménage, Madame de Sévigné 273
The *Ana* other than Ménage's, especially 274
The *Huetiana* 275
Valesiana 275
Scaligerana 276
And *Parrhasiana* 276

Patru, Desmarets, and others . 277
Malebranche 279
The history of Boileau's reputation 280
The *Art Poëtique* 281
Its false literary history . . . 281
Abstract of it 282
Critical examination of it . . 286
Want of originality . . . 287
Faults of method 287
Obsession of good sense . . . 288
Arbitrary proscriptions . . . 289
Boileau's other works . . . 290
The *Satires* 290
The *Epigrams* and *Epistles* . 292
Prose—The *Héros de Roman*; the *Réflexions sur Longin* . . . 292
The "Dissertation on *Joconde*" . 293
A "Solifidian of Good Sense" . 295
The plea for his practical services . 296
Historical examination of this . 296
Concluding remarks on him . . 299
La Bruyère and Fénelon . . . 300
The "Des Ouvrages de l'Esprit" . 301
General observations . . . 302
Judgments of authors . . . 303
Fénelon. The *Dialogues sur l'Eloquence* 305
Sur les Occupations de l'Académie Française 306
And its challenge to correctness . 307
The Abbé D'Aubignac . . . 309
His *Pratique du Théâtre* . . 309
Rapin 310
His method partly good . . . 311
His particular absurdities as to Homer in blame 311
As to Virgil in praise . . . 312
As to others 313
The reading of his riddle . . 313
Le Bossu and the Abstract Epic . 314
Bouhours 315
Encyclopædias and Newspapers . 316
Bayle 316
Baillet 317
The ethos of a Critical Pedant . 318
Gibert 319
The Ancient and Modern Quarrel . 320
Its small critical value . . . 321

CHAPTER II.

THE ITALIAN DECADENCE AND THE SPANIARDS.

Decadence of Italian Criticism . 323
Paolo Beni 324
Possevino: his *Bibliotheca Selecta* . 325
Tassoni: his *Pensieri Diversi* . 326
Aromatari 328
His *Degli Autori del Ben Parlare* 329
Boccalini and Minors . . . 329
Influence of the *Ragguagli* . . 330
The set of Seicentist taste . . 331
Spanish criticism: highly ranked by Dryden? 331
The Origins—Villena . . . 333
Santillana 333
Encina 335
Valdés 335
The beginning of regular Criticism. Humanist Rhetoricians . . 336
Poetics: Rengifo 337
Pinciano 338
La Cueva 341
Carvallo 341
Gonzales de Salas 341
The *Cigarrales* of Tirso de Molina . 343
Lope's *Arte Nuevo*, &c. . . . 344
His assailants and defenders . . 346
The fight over the Spanish drama . 347
Cervantes and Calderon . . . 347
Gongorism, Culteranism, &c. . . 349
Quevedo 349
Gracián 349
The limitations of Spanish criticism 350

CHAPTER III.

GERMAN AND DUTCH CRITICISM.

The hindmost of all . . . 352
Origins 353
Sturm 353
Fabricius 354
Version A. 354
Version B. 354
Jac. Pontanus 355
Heinsius: the *De Tragœdiæ Constitutione* 356
Voss 357
His *Rhetoric* 358
His *Poetics* 359
Opitz 360
The *Buch der Deutschen Poeterei* . 361

CHAPTER IV.

DRYDEN AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

Dead water in English Criticism . 365
Milton 365
Cowley 366
The Prefatory matter of *Gondibert* . 367
The "Heroic Poem" . . . 368
Davenant's *Examen* . . . 369
Hobbes's Answer 370
Dryden 371
His advantages 372
The early Prefaces 373
The *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* . 376
Its setting and overture . . . 376
Crites for the Ancients . . . 377
Eugenius for the "last age" . . 378
Lisideius for the French . . . 378
Dryden for England and Liberty . 379
Coda on rhymed plays, and conclusion 380
Conspicuous merits of the piece . 381
The Middle Prefaces . . . 382
The *Essay on Satire* and the *Dedication of the Æneis* . . . 385
The Parallel of Poetry and Painting 386
The *Preface to the Fables* . . 386
Dryden's general critical position . 386
His special critical method . . 387
Dryden and Boileau . . . 389
Rymer 391
The *Preface to Rapin* . . . 392
The *Tragedies of the Last Age* . 394
The *Short View of Tragedy* . . 395
The Rule of Tom the Second . . 397
Sprat 398
Edward Phillips 398
His *Theatrum Poetarum* . . 399
Winstanley's *Lives* 400
Langbaine's *Dramatic Poets* . . 400
Temple 401
Bentley 401
Collier's *Short View* . . . 402
Sir T. P. Blount 404
Periodicals: *The Athenian Mercury*, &c. 406

INTERCHAPTER V. 407

BOOK IV

RENAISSANCE CRITICISM

"*Le materie da scienza, o da arte, o da istoria comprese, possano esser convenevoli soggetti a poesia, e a poemi, pure che poeticamente sieno trattate.*"—PATRIZZI.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY—ERASMUS.

THE CRITICAL STARTING-POINT OF THE RENAISSANCE—INFLUENCES AT WORK: GENERAL — PARTICULAR — WEAKNESS OF VERNACULARS — RECOVERY OF ANCIENT CRITICISM—NECESSITY OF DEFENCE AGAINST PURITANISM—THE LINE OF CRITICISM RESULTANT—NOT NECESSARILY ANTI-MEDIÆVAL, BUT CLASSICAL AND ANTI-PURITAN—ERASMUS—THE 'CICERONIANUS'—THE 'COLLOQUIES'—THE 'LETTERS'—DISTRIBUTION OF THE BOOK.

WE saw, in the second section of the Interchapter which served as Conclusion to the first volume of this work, to what a point the Middle Ages had brought the materials and the methods of Literary Criticism, and what the new age with its combined opportunities might have done. We also endeavoured to indicate generally, and so to speak, proleptically, what it did *not* do. It is now time to examine what it did: and in the course of the examination to develop the reasons, the character, and the consequences, both of its commission and of its abstention.[1]

The Critical starting-point of the Renaissance.

If no period has ever been more guilty of that too usual

[1] At the beginning of Book III. I had practically no obligations to any general guide to confess; at the beginning of Book II. not very many. Here, as in the case of M. Egger in regard to Book I., I have cheerfully to acknowledge the forerunnership and help of Mr Joel Elias Spingarn, whose *History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance* appeared (New York and London) in 1899. I shall have occasion to differ with Mr Spingarn here and there; and his conception of a History of Criticism is not mine, just as, no doubt, mine is not his. But the obligations of the second treader of a previously untrodden path to the first are perhaps the greatest that fall to be acknowledged in any literary task; and I acknowledge them in Mr Spingarn's case to the fullest extent possible.

injustice to predecessors which we noted, it is fair to acknowledge that none had greater temptations to such injustice. The breach between the Classical and the Dark Ages had been almost astonishingly gradual—so gradual that it has needed no great hardiness of paradox to enable men to deny that there was any breach at all. On the other hand, though the breach at the Renaissance [1] is capable of being, and has sometimes been, much exaggerated; though it was preceded by a considerable transition period, and though mediæval characteristics survived it long and far, yet the turning over of the new leaf is again incontestable, and was as necessary in the order of thought as it is certain in the sequence of fact.

Influences at work: General.

It is not much more than a hundred years since the French Revolution, a single event in one department only of things actual, was sufficient to precipitate a change which is only less—which some would hold likely to be not less—than the change at the beginning of the Dark Ages, and the change at the end of the Middle. At the Renaissance, not one but three or four such events, in as many different departments, brought their shock to bear upon the life and mind of Europe. The final disappearance of the Eastern Empire, and the apparent—perhaps, indeed, a little more than apparent—danger of a wide and considerable barbarian invasion of even Western Europe, with the balancing of this after a sort a little later by the extinction of the Moorish power in Spain, coincided, as regards politics, with a general tendency throughout Europe towards the change of feudal into centralised monarchy. The determination (resulting no doubt from no single cause, and taking effect after long preparation) of direct, practical, and extensive study to the Classics, especially to Greek, affected not merely literature, but almost everything of which literature treats. The invention of printing enormously facilitated, not merely the study but, the diffusion and propagation of ideas and patterns. The discovery of America, and of the sea-route to the East, excited that spirit of exploration and adventure which, once aroused, is sure

[1] The complaints sometimes made as to the ambiguity and want of authority of this term may have some justification; but convenience and (by this time) usage must be allowed their way.

not to limit itself to the material world. And, lastly, the long-threatened and at last realised protest against the corruptions of the Christian Church, and the domination of the Pope, unsettled, directly or indirectly, every convention, every compromise, every accepted doctrine. In fact, to use the words of one of the greatest of English writers,[1] in what is perhaps his most brilliant passage, "in the fabric of habit which they had so laboriously built for themselves, men could remain no longer."

Their critical habits, as we have seen sufficiently in the last Book, had been mainly negative; and for this reason, if for no other, a considerable critical development would have been certain to spring up. But there were other reasons, and powerful ones. In the first place, the atmosphere of revolt which was abroad necessarily breeds, or rather necessarily implies, criticism. A few, whom the equal Jove has loved, may be able to criticise while acquiescing, approving, even loving and strenuously championing; but this equity is not exceedingly common, and the general tendency of acceptance, and even of acquiescence, is distinctly uncritical. On the other hand, the rebel is driven either to his rebellion by the exercise of his critical faculty, or to the exercise of his critical faculty in order to justify his rebellion. I do not myself hold that the Devil was the first critic. I have not the slightest desire to serve myself and my subject heirs to that spirit unfortunate; but I recognise the necessity of some argument to rebut the filiation.

And that these generalities should become particular in reference to Literary Criticism more especially, there were additional and momentous inducements of two different kinds.

Particular.

In the first place, the malcontents with the immediate past must in any case have been drawn to attack the literary side of its battlements, because of their extreme weakness. Everywhere but in the two extremities of the West, Italy and Scotland (the latter, owing to the very small bulk of its literary production, and the rudimentary condition of its language, being hardly an exception at all), the fifteenth century, even with a generous eking from the earliest sixteenth, had been a time of literary torpor and literary decadence, relieved

[1] Mr Froude in the opening of his *History*.

only by a few—a very few—brilliant individual performances. In England the successors of Chaucer, not content with carrying his method and his choice of subject no further, had almost incomprehensibly lost command of both. In France the *rhétoriqueur* school of poets had degenerated less in form, but had been almost equally unable to show any progress, or even any maintained command, of matter. Germany was far worse than either. If Chaucer himself could criticise, indirectly but openly, the faults of the still vigorous and beautiful romance — of the romance which in his own country was yet to boast Chester in verse and Malory in prose —how much more must any one with sharp sense and sound taste, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, have been tempted to apply some similar process to the fossilised formalism of *rondeau* and *ballade;* to the lifeless and lumbering allegory of the latest "Rose" imitations; to the "aureate," or rather tinselled, bombast of Chastellain and Robertet?

Weakness of Vernaculars.

But, as it happened, no inconsiderable part of the newly disinterred classics dealt with this very subject of Literary Criticism, and, having been most neglected, was certain to be most attended to. Later mediæval practice had provided the examples of disease: earlier classical theory was to provide the remedy. Plato, the most cherished of the recovered treasures, had—in his own peculiar way, no doubt — criticised very largely; the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric* were quickly set afresh before the new age in the originals; Horace had always been known; Quintilian was, since Rhetoric had not yet fallen into disfavour, studied direct;[1] and, before the sixteenth century was half over, Longinus himself had been unearthed and presented to a world which (if it had chosen to attend thereto) was also for the first time furnished with Dante's critical performance.[2] With such an arsenal; with such a disposition of mind abroad; and with such real or imagined ene-

Recovery of Ancient Criticism.

[1] The *complete* text was, as is well known, not discovered (by Poggio at St Gallen) till the fifteenth century had nearly filled its second decade, but the book had been studied long before.

[2] Very great influence on sixteenth, and even on seventeenth, century criticism has also been frequently, and perhaps correctly, assigned to the grammatical works and Terentian Scholia of Donatus.

mies to attack, it would have been odd if the forces of criticism, so long disorganised, and indeed disembodied, had not taken formidable shape.

Necessity of defence against Puritanism.

There was, however, yet another influence which is not very easy to estimate, and which has sometimes perhaps been not quite rightly estimated, but which undoubtedly had a great deal to do with the matter. Almost as soon as—almost before indeed—the main battle of the Renaissance engaged itself, certain phenomena, not unusual in similar cases, made their appearance. Men of letters, humanists, students, were necessarily the protagonists of revolt or reform. There had always, as we have seen, been a certain jealousy of Letters on the part of the Church; and this was not likely to be lessened in the new arrangement of circumstance. But the jealousy was by no means confined to the party of order and of the defence. It had been necessary, or it would have had no rank-and-file, for the attack to enlist the descendants of the old Lollards and other opponents of the Romish Church in different countries. But in these, to no small extent, and in men like Calvin, when they made their appearance, perhaps still more, the Puritan dislike of Art, and of Literature as part of Art, was even more rampant than in the obscurest of *obscuri viri* on the Catholic and Conservative side. And so men of letters had not merely to attack what they thought unworthy and obsolete foes of literature, but to defend literature itself from their own political and ecclesiastical allies.

The line of criticism resultant.

The line which they took had been taken before, and was no doubt partly suggested to them by Boccaccio in the remarkable book already referred to[1]—the *De Genealogia Deorum*—which was repeatedly printed in the early days of the press. There can be very little question that this anticipates the peculiar tone of what we may call anti-Platonic Platonism, which is so noticeable in the Italian critics of the Renaissance, and which was caught from them by Englishmen of great note and worth, from Sidney to Milton. The excellent historian of the subject—whom I have already

[1] Vol. i. p. 457 *sq.*

quoted, and my indebtedness to whom must not be supposed to be repudiated because I cannot agree with him on some important points—is, I think, entirely wrong in speaking of mediæval "distrust of literature," while the statement with which he supports this, that "popular literature had fallen into decay, and, in its contemporary form, was beneath serious consideration,"[1] is so astonishing, that I fear we must class it with those *judicia ignorantium* of which our general motto speaks. In his context Mr Spingarn mentions, as examples of mediæval treatment of literature, Fulgentius, Isidore, John of Salisbury, Dante, Boccaccio. What "popular" (by which I presume is meant vernacular) literature was there in the times of Fulgentius or of Isidore? Is not the statement that "popular literature had fallen into decay" in the time of Dante self-exploded? And the same may be said of Boccaccio. As for John of Salisbury, he certainly, as we have seen,[2] was not much of a critic himself; but that popular literature was decaying in his time is a statement which no one who knows the *Chansons de Gestes* and the Arthurian Legend can accept for one moment; while the documents also quoted *supra*, the *Labyrinthus*, the *Nova Poetria*, and the rest—entirely disprove any "distrust" of letters.

Not necessarily anti-mediæval,

The truth is, with submission to Mr Spingarn, that there never was any such, except from the Puritan-religious side, and that this was by no means specially conspicuous in the Middle Ages. The "Defence of Poesy," and of literature generally, which animates men so different as Boccaccio and Milton, as Scaliger and Sidney, is no direct revolt against the Middle Ages at all, but, as has been said, a discourse *Pro Domo*, in the first place, against the severer and more obscurantist partisans of Catholicism, who were disposed to dislike men of letters as Reformers, and literature as the instrument of Reformation; secondly, and much more urgently, against the Puritan and Philistine variety of Protestantism

[1] Spingarn, *op. cit.*, p. 2. On the previous page there is the equally surprising statement that in the Middle Ages "Poetry was disregarded or contemned, or was valued, if at all, for qualities that least belong to it." What were these "qualities"?

[2] Vol. i. p. 414 *note*.

itself, which so soon turned against its literary leaders and allies. And the special form which this defence took was in turn mainly conditioned, not by anti-mediæval animus, but in part by the circumstances of the case, in part by the character of the critical weapons which men found in their new arsenal of the Classics.

but classical

Classical Criticism, as we have seen in the preceding volume, had invariably in theory, and almost as invariably in practice, confined itself wholly or mainly to the consideration of "the subject." Although Aristotle himself had not denied the special pleasure of art and the various kinds of art, although Plato, in distrusting and denouncing, had admitted the psychagogic faculties thereof; yet nobody except Longinus had boldly identified the chief end of it with "transport," not with persuasion, with edification, or anything of the kind. Accordingly, those who looked to the ancients to help them against the *Obscuri Viri* on the one hand, and against good Puritan folk like our own Ascham on the other, were almost bound to keep the *pleasure* of poetry and literature generally in the background; or, if they brought it to the front at all, to extol it and defend it on ethical and philosophical, not on æsthetic grounds. Taking a hint from their "sweet enemy" Plato, from Plutarch, and from such neo-Platonic utterances as that tractate of Plotinus, which has been discussed in its place,[1] they set themselves to prove that poetry was *not* a sweet pleasant deceit or corrupting influence in the republic, but a stronghold and rampart of religious and philosophical truth. Calling in turn Aristotle to their assistance, and working him in with his master and rival, they dwelt with redoubled and at length altogether misleading and misled energy on "Action," "Unity," and the like. And when they did consider form it was, always or too often, from the belittling point of view of the ancients themselves in spirit, and from the meticulous point of view of Horace (who had always been known) in detail. Here and there in such a man as Erasmus (v. *infra*), who was nothing if not sensible, we find the Gellian and Macrobian particularisms taken up with a

and anti-Puritan.

[1] Vol. i. pp. 67, 68.

really progressive twist towards inquiry as to the bearing of these particularities on the pleasure of the reader. But Erasmus was writing in the "false dawn"; the Puritan tyranny of Protestantism on the one side, and of the Catholic revival on the other, had not brought back a partial night as yet; and some of the best as well as some of the worst characteristics of the new age inclined those of his immediate successors rather than contemporaries, who adopted criticism directly, to quite different ways.

Erasmus.

It would, however, be a glaring omission if the critical position of Erasmus himself were not set forth at some length.[1] Standing as he does, the most eminent literary figure of Europe on the bridge of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, nothing if not critical as he is in his general temperament, and on the textual and exegetical, if not on the strictly literary sides of the Art, one of its great historical figures—his absence from this gallery would be justly regarded as inexcusable. And if his voluminous work does not yield us very much within the more special and fully enfranchising lines of our system, it might be regarded as a sufficient answer to say that the imperfection of the vernaculars, his own concentration on particular forms of Biblical and patristic text-criticism, and that peculiar cosmopolitanism which made him practically of no country at all, served to draw him away from a practice in which he would, but for these circumstances and conditions, have certainly indulged.

It may, however, be doubted whether Erasmus would ever have made a capital figure as a purely literary critic. Very great man of letters as he was, and almost wholly literary as were his interests, those interests were suspiciously directed towards the applied rather than the pure aspects of literature—were, in short, *per se* rather scientific than literary proper. It is at least noteworthy that the *Ciceronianus* (though Erasmus was undoubtedly on the right side in it) was directed against a

[1] Erasmus is still only readable as a whole, or in combination of his really important literary work, in the folios of Beatus Rhenanus (8 vols., Basle, 1540-1) or Le Clerc (10 vols., Lyons, 1703-6). It is a thousand pities that this more important literary work, at least, has not been re-edited together accessibly and cheaply.

purely literary folly, against an exaggeration of one of the tastes and appetites which spur on the critic. And it is almost enough to read the *Adagia* and *Apophthegmata*—books much forgotten now, but written with enormous zest and pains by him, and received with corresponding attention and respect by two whole centuries at least—to see how much is there left out which a literary critic *pur sang* could not but have said.

The Ciceronianus.

The *Ciceronianus*, however, must receive a little fuller treatment, both because of its intimate connection with our subject, and because hardly any work of Erasmus, except the *Colloquies*, so definitely estates him in the new position of critical man of letters, as distinguished from that of philosophical or rhetorical teacher. The piece[1] (which has for its second title *De Optimo Dicendi Genere*) did not appear, and could not have appeared, very early in his career. He might even, in the earlier part of that career, have been slow to recognise the popular exaggeration which, as in the other matter of the Reformation itself, struck his maturer intelligence. He glances at its genesis in divers of his letters, to Budæus, to Alciatus, and others, from 1527 onwards, and the chief "begetter" of it seems to have been the Flemish scholar, Longolius (Christophe de Longueil), who during the latter part of his short life was actually very much such a fanatic as the Nosoponus of the dialogue. This person is described by his friends Bulephorus and Hypologus as *olim rubicundulus, obesulus, Veneribus et gratiis undique scatens*, but now an austere shadow, who has no aspiration in life but to be "Ciceronian." In order to achieve this distinction, he has given his days and nights wholly to the study of Cicero. The "copy" of his Ciceronian lexicon would already overload two stout porters. He has noted the differing sense of every word, whether alone or in context; and by the actual occurrence, not merely of the word itself, but of its form and case, he will be absolutely governed. Thus, if you are to be a true Ciceronian, you may

[1] First printed at Basle, 1528. Besides the general editions, there are some separate reprints (*e.g.*, Oxford, 1693). But it ought to have shared the popular diffusion of the *Colloquies*.

say *ornatus* and *ornatissimus*, but not *ornatior;* while, though *nasutus* is permitted to you, both comparative and superlative are barred. In the same way, he will only pass the actual cases and numbers found in the Arpinate; though every one but, let us say, the dative plural occurs, the faithful must not presume to usurp that dative. Further, he intends to reduce the whole of Cicero to quantitative rhythm, fully specified; and in his own writing he thinks he has done well if he accomplishes one short period in a winter night. The piece begins with the characteristic Erasmian banter,—Nosoponus is a bachelor, and Bulephorus observes that it is just as well, for *his* wife would in the circumstances either make an irruption into the study, and turn it topsy-turvy, or console herself with somebody else in some other place,—but by degrees becomes more serious, and ends with a sort of adjustment of most ancient and many modern Latin writers to the Ciceronian point of view.

That Erasmus, with his usual shrewdness, hits the great blot of the time—the merely literal and "Capernaite" interpretation of the classics—is perhaps less surprising than that he should hit such much later crazes as the Flaubertian devotion of a night to a clause, and the still prevalent reluctance of many really literary persons to allow a reasonable analogy and extension from the actual practice of authority. It was inevitable that he should offend the pedants (from Scaliger downwards), and be attacked by them with the usual scurrility; and it is not quite certain that any but very few of his readers thoroughly sympathised with him. In this as in other matters he was not so much before his time (for the time of the wise is a *nunc stans*), as outside of the time of his contemporaries. But even here we see that he was still of that time as well. He has no real sympathy with the vernaculars, nor any comprehension of the fact that they are on equal literary terms with the classical tongues; and even in regard to this—even when he is vindicating the freedom of the letter—his thoughts are fixed on the letter mainly.

That it was better so, there can be no doubt. Literary criticism proper could wait: correction of the mediæval habit of indiscriminate acceptance of texts could not. And still, as it is, we

have from Erasmus not a little agreeable material of that kind which we have sedulously gathered in the preceding volume; which, from men like him, we shall not neglect in this; but for which there will be decreasingly little and less room, both here and still more in the "not impossible" third.

The Colloquies.

Considering the very wide range in subject of the *Colloquies*,[1] it is not quite insignificant that literary matters have but a small place in them; there is perhaps more significance still in the nature of the treatment where it does occur. The chief *locus* is inevitably the *Convivium Poeticum*, where, except the account of the feast itself, and the excellent by-play with the termagant *gouvernante* Margaret, the whole piece is literary, and in a manner critical. But the manner is wholly verbal; or else concerned with the very mint and anise of form. A various reading in Terence from a codex of Linacre's; the possibility of eliding or slurring the consonantal *v*; whether *Exilis* in the Palinode to Canidia is a noun or a verb; whether the Ambrosian rhymes are to be scanned on strict metrical principles; the mistakes made by Latin translators of Aristotle,—this is the *farrago libelluli*. I must particularly beg to be understood as not in the least slighting these discussions. They had to be done; it is our great debt on this side to the Renaissance that it got over the doing of them for us in so many cases; they are the necessary preliminary to all criticism—nay, they are an important part of criticism itself. But they are only the rudiments.

The *Concio, sive Merdardus*, after an explanation of the offensive sub-title (which has less of good-humoured superiority, and more of the snappish Humanist temper, than is usual with Erasmus), declines into similar matters of reading and rendering—here in reference not to profane but to sacred literature. And the curious *Conflictus Thaliæ et Barbariei*, which is more dramatically arranged than most of the *Colloquies*, and may even have taken a hint from the French Morality of *Science et Asnerye*,[2]

[1] I use the Tauchnitz ed. (with the *Encomium Moriæ*) in 2 vols. (Leipsic: 1829).

[2] *V.* E. Fournier, *Théâtre Français avant la Renaissance* (Paris, n. d.), p. 334 *sq.* It is not at all impossible that the indebtedness may be the other way. The dates of these pieces are very uncertain.

loses, as it may seem to us, an opportunity of being critical in the best and real kind. The antagonists exchange a good deal of abuse, which on Thalia's part extends to some mediæval writers cited by Barbaries (among whom our poor old friend John of Garlandia rather unfairly figures), and the piece, which is short, ends with a contest in actual citation of verse—Leonine and scholastic enough on the part of Barbaries, gracefully enough *pastiched* from the classics on the part of Thalia. But Erasmus either deliberately declines, or simply does not perceive, the opening given for a *critical* indication of the charms of purity and the deformities of barbarism.

To thread the mighty maze of the *Letters*[1] completely, for the critical utterances to be picked up there, were more tempting than strictly incumbent on the present adventurer, who has, however, not neglected a reasonable essay at the adventure. The adroit and good-humoured attempt to soothe the poetic discontent of Eobanus Hessus, who thought Erasmus had not paid him proper attention,[2] contains, for instance, a little matter of the kind, and several references to contemporary Latin poets. The most important thing, perhaps, is the opinion—sensible as usual with the writer—that, as the knowledge of Greek becomes more and more extended, translation of it into Latin is more and more lost labour. But Erasmus, as we should expect, evidently has more at heart the questions of "reading and rendering" which fill his correspondence with Budæus and others. To take the matter in order, a curious glimpse of the literary manners, as well as the literary judgments, of the time is afforded by an enclosure in a letter to John Watson of Cambridge. Watson wanted to know what Erasmus had been doing, and Erasmus, answering indirectly, sends him a letter on the subject by one Adrian Barland of Louvain to his brother. Some incidental expressions here about Euripides as *nobilissimus poeta*, and Apuleius as producing *pestilentissimas facetias*, are more

[1] I use the London folio of 1642, where the letter to Hessus, the Fifth of the Twenty-sixth book, will be found at col. 1407-10. I wish Mr Nichols' excellent rearrangement had been available. But even its first volume only appeared when this book was in the printer's hands.

[2] Hessus, it may be not superfluous to say, was one of the authors of the *Epistolæ Obscurorum*, and in verse one of the very best Humanists of Germany.

valuable to us than the copious laudations of Erasmus' own work, which pass without any "Spare my blushes!" from the recipient and transmitter. We note that the moral point of view is still uppermost, though the observations are taken from a different angle. Aristophanes would have regarded Euripides as much more "pestilent," morally speaking, than Apuleius. The long and necessarily complimentary letter (ii. 1) to Leo the Tenth contains some praise of Politian and much of Jerome, on whom Erasmus was then engaged; and while the language of this correspondence naturally abounds in Ciceronian hyperbole, it is not insignificant that Erasmus describes the Father with the Lion as *omni in genere litterarum absolutissimus*, which, assuming any real meaning in it, is not quite critical, though Jerome was certainly no small man of letters. The letter to Henry Bovill (ii. 10), which contains the famous story of "mumpsimus" and "sumpsimus," as well as the almost equally famous account of the studies of the University of Cambridge in the ninth decade of the fifteenth century, contains also a notable division of his own critics of the unfavourable kind. They are *aut adeo morosi ut nihil omnino probent nisi quod ipsi faciunt; aut adeo stolidi ut nihil sentiant; aut adeo stupidi ut nec legant quod carpunt; aut adeo indocti ut nihil judicent; aut adeo gloriæ jejuni avidique ut carpendis aliorum laboribus sibi laudem parent.* And their children are alive with us unto this day.

The Letters.

There is a very curious, half modest and severe, half confident criticism of his own verses in ii. 22. He admits that there is nothing "tumultuous" in them, "no torrent overflowing its banks," no *deinosis:* but claims elegance and Atticism. It would be perhaps unfair to attach the character of deliberate critical utterance to his effusive laudation of the style of Colet in an early letter (v. 4, dated 1498, but Mr Seebohm has thrown doubt on these dates, and Mr Nichols appears to be completely redistributing them), as *placidus sedatus inaffectatus, fontis limpidissimi in morem ditissimo e pectore scatens, æqualis, sui undique similis, apertus, simplex, modestiæ plenus, nihil usquam habens scabri contorti conturbati.* But it is interesting, and significant of his own performances, as is the comparison (v. 19)

of Jerome and Cicero as masters of rhetoric. The somewhat intemperate and promiscuous contempt of mediæval writing which appears in the *Conflictus* (*vide supra*) reappears, with the very same names mentioned, in an epistle (vii. 3), *Cornelio Suo*, of 1490, which, if it be rightly dated, must be long anterior to the Colloquy. But a much more important expression of critical opinion than any of these appears in v. 20 to Ammonius, where Erasmus gives his views on poetry at large. They are much what we should suspect or expect beforehand. Some folk, he says, think that a poem is not a poem unless you poke in all the gods from heaven, and from earth, and from under the earth. *He* has always liked poetry which is at no great distance from prose—*but the best prose*.[1] He likes rhetorical poetry and poetical rhetoric. He does not care for far-fetched thoughts; let the poet stick to his subject, but give fair attention to smoothness of versification. "Prose and sense," in short: with a little rhetoric and versification added.

But on such matters he always touches lightly, and with little elaboration; and to see where his real interest lay we have but to turn to the above-quoted verbal discussions with Budæus on the one hand, to the minute and well-known account of More's life and conversation given to Hutten in x. 30 on the other. Nor do I think that it is worth while to extend to the remaining two-thirds of the letters the more exact examination which has here been given to the first third or thereabouts.[2]

Once more, far be it from any reasonable person to blame Erasmus, or any of his immediate contemporaries, for not doing what it was not their chief business to do. That chief business, in the direction of criticism, was to shake off the critical promiscuousness of the Middle Ages, to insist on the importance of accurate texts and exact renderings, to stigmatise the actual

[1] Mihi semper placuit carmen quod a prosa, sed optima, non longe recederet.—*Op. cit.*, col. 420.

[2] Those who would like to continue this may look, among many other places, at xii. 7 (praise of Politian); xv. 17 (jubilation over the confusion of Humanism); xvii. 11 (ditto to Vives); xxi. 4 (a good deal on writers both ancient and modern), and especially xxvi. 5 (above noticed).

barbarism, the mere *mumpsimus*, which had no doubt too often taken the place not only of pure classical Latinity, not only of the fine if not classical Latin of Tertullian and Augustine and Jerome, but of that exquisite "sport" the Latin of the early Middle Age hymns, to hammer Greek into men's heads (or elsewhere), to clear up the confusion of dates and times and values, which had put the false Callisthenes on a level with Arrian, and exalted Dares above Homer. Even the literary beauty of the classics themselves was not their main affair;—they had to inculcate school-work rather than University work, University work rather than the maturer study of literature. Of the vernaculars it was best that they should say nothing: for except Italian none was in a very good state, and Humanists were much more likely to speak unadvisedly with their lips if they did speak on the subject. They worked their work: well were it for all if others did the same.

Distribution of the Book.

For the reasons given, then, Erasmus and those whom he represents[1] could do little for criticism proper; and for the same (or yet others closely connected) the northern nations, of whom Erasmus is the most distinguished literary representative, could for a long time do as little: while some of them for a much longer did nothing at all. Of the others, the criticism of Spain, the criticism of France, and the criticism of England were all borrowed directly from that of Italy. The Spaniards did not begin till so late that their results, like those of Opitz and other Germans, cannot be properly treated till the next Book. France was stirred about the middle of the century, and England a very little later. These two countries, therefore, will properly have each its chapter in the present book. But two of much more importance must first be given to those Italian developments, in our Art or Study, on which both French and English criticism are based. The first will deal with those who write, roundly speaking, before Scaliger; the second with the work of that redoubted Aristarch, with the equally—perhaps the more—important name of Castelvetro,

[1] See *infra* (pp. 27-29) on Augustinus Olmucensis (Käsenbrot) and Cornelius Agrippa.

with the weary wrangle over the *Gerusalemme Liberata* (which, weary as it is, is the first great critical debate over a contemporary vernacular work of importance, and therefore within measure not to be missed by us), and with certain of the later Italian critical theorists, of the sixteenth and earliest seventeenth century, who are valuable, some as continuing, some as more or less ineffectually fighting against, the neo-classic domination.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY ITALIAN CRITICS.

THE BEGINNINGS—SAVONAROLA—PICO, ETC.—POLITIAN—THE 'MANTO'—THE 'AMBRA' AND 'RUSTICUS'—THE 'NUTRICIA'—THEIR MERITS AND DANGER—PETRUS CRINITUS: HIS 'DE POETIS LATINIS'—AUGUSTINUS OLMUCENSIS: HIS 'DEFENCE OF POETRY'—PARADOXICAL ATTACKS ON IT BY CORNELIUS AGRIPPA, LANDI, BERNI—VIDA—IMPORTANCE OF THE 'POETICS'—ANALYSIS OF THE PIECE—ESSENTIAL POVERTY OF ITS THEORY—HISTORICAL AND SYMPTOMATIC SIGNIFICANCE—THE ALLEGED APPEAL TO REASON AND NATURE—THE MAIN STREAM STARTED—TRISSINO—DIVISION OF HIS 'POETIC'—HIS CRITICAL VALUE—EDITORS, ETC., OF THE 'POETICS'—PAZZI—ROBORTELLO, SEGNI, MAGGI, VETTORI—THEORISTS: DANIELLO—FRACASTORO—FORMALISTS: MUTIO. TOLOMEI AND CLASSICAL METRES—OTHERS: TOMITANO, LIONARDI, B. TASSO, CAPRIANO—IL LASCA—BEMBO—CARO—VARCHI—MINTURNO—THE 'DE POETA'—THE 'ARTE POETICA'—THEIR VALUE—GIRALDI CINTHIO'S 'DISCORSI'—ON ROMANCE—ON DRAMA—SOME POINTS IN BOTH—ON SATIRE—PIGNA—LILIUS GIRALDUS: HIS 'DE POETIS NOSTRORUM TEMPORUM'—ITS WIDTH OF RANGE—BUT NARROWNESS OF VIEW—HORROR AT PREFERENCE OF VERNACULAR TO LATIN—YET A REAL CRITIC IN BOTH KINDS—SHORT "PRÉCIS" OF THE DIALOGUES—THEIR GREAT HISTORIC VALUE.

The beginnings.

IT is not necessary to discuss, or even to expose at any length, the causes of the relative precocity of Italian Criticism in the Renaissance. They are practically all contained in, and can by the very slightest expense of learning and intelligence be extracted from, the fact that Italy was at once the cradle of Humanist study of the Classics, and the only country in Europe which possessed a fully developed vernacular. But for the greater part of the fifteenth century attention was diverted from actual criticism—except

of the validating or invalidating kind—by the prior and eagerer appetite for the discovery, study, and popularising, by translation and otherwise, of the actual authors and texts. For a long time, indeed, this appetite showed the usual promiscuity of such affections; and it was scarcely till the time of Vittorino da Feltre that much critical discrimination of styles was introduced. But these and other kindred things came surely, and brought criticism with them, though criticism still generally of the moral and educational kind. The Boccaccian defence was taken up by various writers of note—Bruni,[1] Guarino, Æneas Sylvius—and before the close of the fifteenth century two of the greatest of Florentines had indicated in different ways the main lines which Italian criticism was to take. These two were Savonarola and Politian.

Savonarola.

The tendency of each could be anticipated by any one who, though actually ignorant of it, knew the characteristics of the two men in other ways. Fra Girolamo's, of course, is wholly ethical-religious, mainly neo-Platonic, but already presenting the effect of Aristotelian details on the general Platonic attitude to Poetry. Yet he is still scholastic in his general treatment of the subject, and still adopts that close subordination of poetry to Logic which is as old as Averroes and Aquinas, and which, odd as it may seem to merely modern readers, is a very simple matter when examined.[2] He disclaims, as usual, any attack on poetry itself, urging only the

[1] Since I wrote this, an obliging correspondent, Mr P. G. Thomas of Liverpool, has suggested actual quotation of a passage of Bruni's on prose style in his *De Studiis et Literis*. If I do not give this it is, first, because indulgence in quotation here is as the letting out of waters; and, secondly, because the tractate is translated in Mr W. H. Woodward's well-known and excellent book on *Vittorino da Feltre* (Cambridge, 1897), where other matter of interest to us will also be found.

[2] The connecting and explaining link, sometimes omitted, is to be found in *Rhetoric* — the close connection of which with Logic and Grammar is no puzzle, while the connection of poetry with it was then an accepted fact. It is rather dangerous to say that Savonarola, in connecting poetry with logic, was "tending towards the elimination of the Imagination in art." The extremely equivocal nature of the word "Imagination" (*v.* vol. i. pp. 120, 165) needs constantly to be pointed out. In the ancient sense, Imagination is as much connected with Logic as anything else; in the modern, Savonarola probably never even thought of it.

abuse of poetry; but he follows Plato in looking more than askance at it, and Aristotle in denying its necessary association with verse. The Scriptures are the noblest poetry; all ancient poetry is doubtfully profitable. In fact, he regards poetry altogether as specially liable to abuse, and dubiously admissible into, or certainly to be expelled from, a perfect community, such as that on which the fancy of the Renaissance was so much fixed.

Savonarola's remarks, which are contained in his four-book tractate, *De Scientiis*,[1] are more curious than really important. Yet they derive some importance from the great name and influence of their propounder, from his position at the very watershed, so to speak, of time in Europe, if not in Italy, dividing Middle Age from Renaissance, and from the fact that they undoubtedly summarise that dubitative, if not utterly hostile, view of literature in general, and of poetry in particular, which, as we have seen,[2] was borrowed by the Fathers from the ancients, and very much intensified by the borrowers. Fra Girolamo's attitude is a rigidly scholastic one; and to those who omit to take account of this, or do not understand it, his view must seem wholly out of focus, if not wholly obscure. Poetry is a part of Rational Philosophy; and therefore its object must be *pars entis rationis.* It differs from Rhetoric in working purely by Example, not Enthymeme. Its end is to induce men to live virtuously by decent representations; and as the soul loves harmony, it uses harmonic forms. But a poet who merely knows how to play gracefully with feet only deserves the name as an old woman deserves that of a pretty girl.[3] Still more preposterous is the habit of calling poetry "divine." Cosmos becomes chaos, if you admit that. *Scientia autem divina est cujus objectum Deus: non illa cujus objectum exemplum.* The making of verses is only poetry *per accidens;* and as for the Heathen poets, *magnus diaboli laqueus absconditus est* in them. He does not, he says, actually "damn" poetry; but the gist of

[1] Otherwise, *De Divisione et Utilitate Omnium Scientiarum.* I have read this in the Wittemberg ed. of his *Philosophiæ Epitome* (1596, 8vo). The passages quoted and referred to will be found at p. 807 *sq.* of this.

[2] Vol. i. p. 380 *sq.*

[3] Or, "a pretty old woman that of a girl," the position of the epithet between the two nouns being ambiguous.

his tractatule is that poets as a rule quite misunderstand their function, and that poetry had better keep its place, and abstain from silly, not to say blasphemous, airs.

Such a point of view was, of course, liable to be taken by persons alike unlikely to assume the "know-nothing" attitude of the more ignorant Catholics, the Philistine-Puritan attitude of Protestantism, or the merely Platonic and non-Christian theory of some free-thinkers. It might well seem to thoughtful lovers of literature that its very existence was in danger when it was attacked from so many sides, and that it was necessary to intrench it as strongly as possible. Nor were the materials and the plan of the fortification far to seek. The suggestion has been rather oddly discovered in the Geographer Strabo;[1] but authorities much more germane to the matter were at hand. Boccaccio himself had, as we have seen, both taken note of the danger and indicated the means of defence: Maximus Tyrius and Plutarch, the one in a manner more, the other in a manner less, favourable to poetry, had in effect long before traced out the whole Camp of Refuge on lines suitable either to the bolder or to the more timid defender of Poesy. The latter could represent it as the philosophy of the young, as a sort of *Kindergarten*-keeper in the vestibule of the higher mysteries, as not necessarily bad at all, and possibly very good. The former could argue for its equality with philosophy itself, as pursuing the same ends by different means, and appealing, not in the least *in forma pauperis*, to its own part of human nature.

Pico, &c.

It seems by no means improbable that this view was partly brought about by that remarkable influencer both of early mediæval and of early Renaissance thought, Dionysius the Areopagite. Readers of Mr Seebohm's *Oxford Reformers*[2] will remember the curious and in-

[1] Geog. i. 11, 5, where he describes poetry as a rudimentary philosophy, providing an introduction to life, and educating pleasantly. I do not remember who *first*, or who successively, pointed this out before Shaftesbury, *Advice to an Author*, Part I. sect. 3, note *sub fin.* But Castelvetro (*Op. Var.*, p. 83), and Opitz (*v. inf.*, p. 361), among others, refer to it.

[2] More especially p. 46 *sq.* (2nd ed.) The influence of the *Somnium Scipionis* of Macrobius may also have been considerable.

teresting extracts there given from Colet's correspondence with Radulphus, and the explanation of the Mosaic cosmogony as intended to present the Divine proceedings "after the manner of a poet." This view Colet seems to have extracted partly from Dionysius himself, partly from Pico della Mirandola, the most remarkable of Savonarola's converts, while time and place are not inconsistent with the belief that the future Dean of St Paul's may have come into contact with Fra Girolamo himself. Now, this kind of envisagement of poetry, certain to turn to spiritual account in spiritually minded persons like Colet and Savonarola, and in mystically, if not spiritually, minded ones like Pico, would, in the general temper of the Renaissance, of which all three were early illustrations, as certainly turn to more or less spiritualised philosophy — ethical, metaphysical, or purely æsthetic, as the case might be. And we can see in it a *vera causa* of that certainly excessive, if not altogether mistaken, devotion to the abstract questions, "What is a poet?" "What is poetry?" "What is drama?" and so forth, which we perceive in almost all the Italian critics of the mid-sixteenth century, and which is almost equally, if less originally, present in their Elizabethan pupils and followers. If Colet himself had paid more attention to literature, we cannot doubt that this is the line which his own literary criticism would have taken; and as his influence, direct or through Erasmus and More, was very great on English thought, both at Oxford and Cambridge, it is not impossible that it may have been exerted in this very way.

Politian.

The other line (the line which, according to the definitions of the present work, we must call the line of criticism proper), though it was perhaps hardly in this instance traced with boldness and without deflection, started under yet more distinguished auspices. The *Sylvæ* of Politian consist, in the main, of a direct critical survey of classical poetry couched in the, as we may think, somewhat awkward form of verse, decked with all the ornament that could suggest itself to the author's rich, varied, and not seldom really poetical fancy, and arranged with a view to actual recitation in the

lecture-room for the delight and encouragement of actual students.[1]

Neither purpose nor method can be regarded as wholly favourable to criticism. The popular *conférencier* (for this term best expresses Politian's position) is sure to be rather more of a panegyrist or a detractor, as the case may be, than of a critic; and the lecturer in verse is sure to be thinking rather of showing his own rhetorical and poetical gifts than of the strict merits and defects of his subject. But if we take the *Nutricia* or the *Rusticus*, the *Ambra* or the *Manto*, and compare any of them with the well-intentioned summary of the *Labyrinthus*,[2] we shall see without the least unfairness, and fully admitting the difference of ability and of opportunity in the two men, the difference, from the critical point of view, of the two standpoints.

The Manto.

In the "Manto," the first of the *Sylvæ*, the most important characteristic of sixteenth-century Italian criticism proper, the exaltation of Virgil, is already prominent. Politian, indeed, was too much of a wit, and too much of a poet himself, to let his Virgil-worship take the gross and prosaic form which it assumed a little later in Vida. But he has proceeded a long way from the comparatively uncritical (and yet so more critical) standpoint of Dante. He comes to details. Cicero had won the palms of sweetness from Nestor and of tempestuous eloquence from Ulysses (a little vague this), but Greece consoled herself in poetry. Ennius was too rude to give Latium the glory of that. Then came Virgil. Even with the Syracusan reed (*i.e.*, in his Eclogues) he crushes Hesiod and contends with Homer. Calliope took him in her arms as an infant, and kissed him thrice. Manto, the guardian nymph of his native place, hailed his advent, and summarised in prophetic detail his achievements in verse. Her town shall enter the lists—secure of victory—with the seven competitors for Homer's origin. And then a whirlwind of magniloquent peroration

[1] Politian's critical faculty shows to more advantage here than in his attribution of the Epistles of the Pseudo-Phalaris to Lucian (see Bentley's immortal *Dissertation*). He had almost better — from the literary point of view—have believed them genuine.

[2] *V.* vol. i. p. 408.

(charged with epanaphora,[1] that favourite figure of the sixteenth century) extols the poet above all poets and all wonders of the world, past, present, and to come.

But Politian would have been faithful neither to those individual qualities which have been noted in him, nor to that sworn service of Greek which was the chivalry of the true Humanist, if he had thought of depreciating Homer.

The Ambra and Rusticus.

The "Ambra," a poem longer than the "Manto," and not much less enthusiastic, is mainly devoted to a fanciful description of the youth of the poet, and a verse-summary of the poems. Indeed the peroration (till it is turned into a panegyric of Ambra, a favourite villa of Lorenzo) is a brilliant, forcible, and *true* indication of the enormous debt of all ancient literature, science, and in fact life, to Homer, of the universality of his influence, and of the consensus of testimony in his favour. The "Rusticus" is rather an independent description and panegyric of country life, as a preface to the reading of Virgil, Hesiod, and other bucolic and georgic writers, than a criticism or comparison of them. But the "Nutricia" is again ours in the fullest sense. Its avowed argument is *De poetica et poetis*, and, in handling this vast and congenial theme, Politian gives the fullest possible scope at once to his genius, to his learning, and to that intense love for literature without which learning is but as the Carlylian "marine-stores." In nearly eight hundred exultant hexameters,[2] the vigour and

The Nutricia.

[1] *Aut* telo, Summane, tuo traxere ruinam,
Aut trucibus nimbis aut iræ obnoxia Cauri,
Aut tacitis lenti perierunt dentibus ævi.
. . . . . .
Dum ver tristis hyems, autumnum proferet æstas,
*Dum*que fluet spirans refluetque reciproca Tethys,
Dum mixta alternas capient elementa figuras,
Semper erit magni decus immortale Maronis,
Semper inexhaustis ibunt hæc flumina venis,
Semper ab his docti ducentur fontibus haustus,
Semper odoratos fundent hæc gramina flores.
—*Manto*, 335-337, 342-348, p. 303, *ed. cit. inf.*

[2] If anybody charges me with plagiarism from Mr Symonds' "leaping," I had rather plead guilty than quibble. The metaphor is too obviously the right and only one, for the peculiar motion of Politian's verse, to any one who has an ear. I keep, however, the order of the edition I use (that of Signor Isidoro del Lugo, Florence, 1867), not the perhaps more logical one of *Nutricia — Rusticus — Manto — Ambra*, which Mr Symonds followed and which is that of Pope, *op. cit. inf.*

fulness of which enable them to carry off without difficulty the frippery of their occasional trappings, he traces the origin of poetry, the transition from mere stupid wonder and the miseries of barbarism to sacred and profane verse, the elaboration of its laws in Judea by David and Solomon, in Greece by Orpheus, the succession of the Greek and Latin poets in the various forms (it is noteworthy that Politian is not at all copious on the drama) through the exploits of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio to the patronage of poetry by Lorenzo himself.

Their merits This is criticism leaning dangerously on the one side to panegyric, and likely to be (though it is not actually) dragged to the other still more dangerously by partisanship; but it is still criticism. The liker does not "like grossly," or in accordance with mere tradition. He loves, as the American poet says, "not by allowance but with personal love"; and he can give reasons for the love that is in him. He seeks the poetic pleasure from the Muse; he obtains it from her; and he savours it, not merely with eagerness, but with acutely sensitive taste. Though he might not at some moments be averse to refining on the character of poetry generally, as well as on the character of this poetic pleasure, it is this itself that he seeks, finds, and rejoices in. Part at least of the spirit of Longinus is on him; he is transported, and he knows the power that transports.

and danger. At the same time, it must be difficult, for all but the extremest Virgilians, to think that he does not err by way of excess in his estimate of that poet; and it must be still more difficult, even for them, not to perceive that the pitch, even if excusable in the individual, is dangerous as an example. Followers will make-believe; they will give inept reasons to support their made belief; and worst of all, by that fatal catachresis of "imitation" which is always waiting upon the critic, they will begin to think, and to say, that by simply copying and borrowing from Virgil and other great ones you may go near to be thought not entirely destitute of their so-much-praised charm. The danger very soon ceased to be a danger only, and we find a victim to it in Vida; but before coming to him we may divagate a little.

The *furor poeticus* of Politian put him much beyond other Humanists in critical respects. His contemporary and friend, Petrus Crinitus,[1] was, if not quite of the same caste as Politian, by no means of the mere ordinary Humanist type. His kissing-verses, *Dum te Neæra savior*, are among the best of their kind between Petronius and Johannes Secundus; and his curious *pot-pourri*, *De Honesta Sapientia*, is quite worth reading, though one may know most of its constituents well enough beforehand. Yet the literary inquiries here are surprisingly few, and treated in no critical spirit whatsoever, so that there is no disappointment in one sense, though there may be in another, with his three books, *De Poetis Latinis*. These consist of a large number of separate articles in more or less chronological order, by no means ill-written in the classical-dictionary fashion: *Genitus est* here; *obiisse traditur* there, and in such a year; *totum se dicavit poeticæ facultati*, and the rest. The taste as expressed by preferences is not bad, and the approaches (they are hardly more) to critical estimate, though very obvious and mostly traditional, are sound enough and fairly supported by quotation. But of original attempt to grasp and to render the character of Latin poetry generally, or of any one Latin poet by himself, there is hardly a vestige.

Petrus Crinitus: his De Poetis Latinis.

It is not at all improbable that *Poetics* in one form or another, both Italian and "Tedescan," may exist in MSS. of this period: there is certainly work, even in print, of which very little notice has been taken hitherto. For instance, a few months ago my friend Mr Gregory Smith saw in a catalogue, bought, and very kindly lent to me, a *Dialogus in Defensionem Poetices*, printed at Venice in 1493, and written by a certain Augustinus Moravus Olmucensis.[2]

Augustinus Olmucensis: his Defence of Poetry.

[1] My copy is the edition of Gryphius (Lugduni, 1554). Crinitus (Ricci or Riccio) had dedicated it nearly fifty years earlier, and just before his own death, I believe, to Cosmo Pazzi, Bishop of Arezzo, on November 1, 1505.

[2] A fellow-citizen and contemporary printer generally appears in biographical dictionaries under the heading "Olmucensis." The history of Olmütz, by W. Müller (Vienna, 1882), has not come in my way, so I do not know whether Augustinus appears there. The *Dialogus* is duly in Hain, but has not, I think, been much noticed by literary historians.

This writer's family name in vernacular appears to have been Käsenbrot; and he was one of the early German Humanists whose most famous chiefs were Reuchlin earlier, Conrad Celtes and Eobanus Hessus later, who achieved much tolerable verse, and in the *Epistolæ Obscurorum* one immortal piece of prose, but who were whelmed in the deluge of the Reformation struggles, and accomplished little of the good which they might have done to Germany. The *Dialogus*—which has the perhaps not quite accidental interest of having appeared in the year between the writing of Savonarola's somewhat dubious backing of Poetry, and the first printing of Boccaccio's uncompromising and generous championship thereof—cannot be said to be of much intrinsic importance. The author gives, or rather adopts, the definition of Poetry as "a metrical structure of true or feigned narration, composed in suitable rhythm or feet, and adjusted to utility *and* pleasure." But his text is rather rambling. A parallel with Medicine (the piece seems to have been written at Padua, which helps it to its place here) is not very well worked out, and the latter part is chiefly occupied with rather dull-fantastic allegorisings of the stories of Tiresias, the Gorgons, the geography of Hades, and so forth. Still it is a sign, and welcome as such.

Paradoxical attacks on it by Cornelius Agrippa, Landi, Berni.

Another Transalpine may be admitted here, for reasons of time rather than of place, to introduce two undoubted Italians. It is customary to mention the name at least of Cornelius Agrippa,[1] if not exactly as a critic, at any rate as being a denouncer, though no mean practitioner, of literature. It is perhaps a just punishment for his blasphemy that no one who only knew this would dream that the adept of Nettesheim was as good a man of letters as he is. It constitutes the fourth chapter of the *De Vanitate Scientiarum* (1527), and is a mere piece of hackneyed railing at the art which *aures stultorum demulcet*, which is *architectrix mendaciorum et cultrix perversorum dogmatum*, which is *pertenuis et nuda, insulsa, esuriens, famelica.* Alas! if some tales are true, Cornelius (who really was a clever man)

[1] I have used the *Opera*, 2 vols., Lugduni, 1531, 8vo. The passages cited will be found at ii. 14 *sq.*

found that Occultism could starve its votaries as well as Poetry. His attack is, in fact, nothing but an instance of that measles of the Renaissance (nor of the Renaissance only) paradox-quackery; and it has no solid foundation whatever. The later (1543) *Paradossi* of Ortensio Landi[1] exhibit more frankly the same spirit, but in regard to individuals, especially Aristotle, rather than to poetry and literature generally. And it is probably not absent from Berni's *Dialogo contra i Poeti*[2] (1537, but written earlier), in which Poetry is dismissed by this agreeable poet as suitable enough pastime for a gentleman, but out of the question as a regular vocation or serious business.

Vida.

But we must return to serious persons. Of the critical texts to which we pay chief attention in this book, there are not a few which are of far higher critical value than Vida's *Poetics*.[3] But it may be doubted whether even the similarly named treatises of Aristotle and of Horace have had a greater actual influence; and I at least am nearly certain that no modern treatise has had, or has yet had a chance of having, anything like so much. In the recently renewed study of Renaissance Criticism there has been, naturally enough, a repetition of a phenomenon familiar on such occasions—that is to say, the deflection of attention from pretty well-known if half-forgotten material to material which had been still more forgotten, and was hardly known at all. Daniello, Minturno, and the rest had, since the seventeenth century, rested almost undisturbed; even Castelvetro and Scaliger had more or less shrunk to the position of authorities, of some importance, in regard to ancient criticism. But Vida, owing to the unmistakable though unacknowledged borrowing of Boileau, the franker discipleship of Pope, and the inclusion of a very characteristic translation by Pitt among the usual collections of "British Poets," had taken rank once for all. It

[1] For Landi or Lando, see an interesting paper by Mr W. E. A. Axon, in vol. xx. of the Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature.

[2] This, which is very amusing, opens the ed. of Berni's *Opere* in the Sonzogno collection (Milan, 1888).

[3] For the Latin I use Pope's *Selecta Poemata Italorum* (2 vols., London, 1740), ii. 131-189, and the anonymous *Poemata Selecta Italorum* (Oxford, 1808), 207-266; for Pitt's Englishing, Chalmers's *Poets*, xix. 633-651. The original is Rome, 1527, 4to.

is true that it was a rank somewhat of the museum order, but it existed. Now, the critics who followed him and refined upon him have been disinterred, and are enjoying their modest second vogue; and he is comparatively neglected, though a judicious American[1] has put him in modern dress once more with his two great disciples.

Importance of the Poetics.

Of three things, however, the one is absolutely incontestable as a fact, and the other two are not easily, I think, to be gainsaid by competent authority. The first is, that Vida anticipates in time even the earliest of the prose critics of the new Italian school by some couple of years, while he anticipates the main group of these critics by more than twenty. The second is, that though no doubt he took some impulse from Politian and other Humanists, he is practically the first to codify that extravagant Virgil-worship which reigned throughout the Neo-Classical dispensation. The third is that, not merely in this point but in others, he seems, by a sort of intuition, to have anticipated, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, almost the whole critical orthodoxy of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth. It is this which makes the translation of him by Pitt so interesting; because the translator is, for once, no traitor, but *plus royaliste que le roi* — fanatically imbued with the principles, and equipped to the finger-tips with the practice, of his original. But for the purposes of the scholar that original itself must of course be taken.

Analysis of the piece.

The temper and the faith in which Vida writes are made manifest by the very beginning of his poem—an invocation to the Muses woven of unexceptionable *gradus*-tags, and deftly dovetailed into a dedication to the luckless Dauphin Francis, who had then taken his father's place as Charles the Fifth's prisoner at Madrid, and to whose captivity the poem is modestly offered as a solace or pastime. These invocations accomplished *more majorum*, Vida proceeds to occupy his First Book with a sort of general clearing of the ground. He is ready to teach the secret of all kinds of poetry; but the poet must very carefully inquire what are the kinds to which he himself

[1] Prof. A. S. Cook (Boston, 1892).

is best adapted and best inclined. Commissioned work is dubious, unless under a king's command. But there is more than this: the poetic child must be carefully nursed in the arts suitable to his great calling. He must be as carefully guarded from the taint of vulgar and incorrect speech; and must be regularly initiated into Poetry—Latin first, especially Virgil, and then Greek, especially Homer. A short historical sketch of poetry follows; but it, like everything else, is brought round to the deification of the Mantuan. Hence Vida (who must be pronounced rather long in weighing anchor) diverges to a good-natured intercession with parents and teachers not to have the boys whipped too much, telling a moving legend of an extremely pretty [1] boy who was actually whipped to death, or at least died of fear. Emulation, however, is quite a good stimulus; and by degrees work will be loved for itself. But original poetical production must not be attempted too young; there must be time for play; the rudiments of metre and so forth must be thoroughly learnt; and, above all, *non omnes omnia* must be constantly kept in mind. It is better to begin with pastorals and minor subjects; solitude and country life are very desirable circumstances. And so Book I. closes with a fresh invocation of the spirit of poetry and a fresh celebration of its power.

After this rather ample prelude the author somewhat unreasonably (seeing that the delay has been his own doing), but in coachmanlike fashion, says *Pergite! Pierides*, and proposes to unfold the whole of Helicon to coming ages. The first disclosure is scarcely novel. You must invoke Jove and the Muses; nor will one Invocation do. When in doubt always invoke.[2] Next you should, without holding out bombastic promises, allure your reader by a modest but sufficient description of the subject of your poem. So far the method of turning the practice of the ancients into a principle is impartially adjusted to Homer and Virgil alike; but after a few score verses the partisan appears. The beginnings of the

[1] *Insignis facie ante alios*, ed. Oxon., p. 215.

[2] For a very interesting and characteristic view of this "invoking" in the next generation, see Castelvetro, *Op. Var., ed. cit. inf.*, pp. 79-99.

Iliad and the *Odyssey*, the plunging into the midst of things with the wrath of Achilles, and the sojourn with Calypso, instead of the rape of Helen (why not of Hesione?) or the launching from Troy, are duly praised. But the elaborate Homeric descriptions—as that of the car—are boggled at; the introduction of Thersites shocks Vida (Drances seems a far nobler figure), and the pettiness of the subjects of some of the Homeric similes would never suit the magniloquence of the Latian Muse.[1] In Virgil, on the other hand, he can see no fault; even the demand of Venus for arms to clothe her bastard son, which had given qualms to admirers of old, does not disturb Vida at all; and his poem seems to be slipping by degrees into a mere *précis* of the *Æneid*, that each trait actually found in Virgil may be registered as a pattern to poets generally. He wrenches himself free for a moment to inculcate the following of nature; but presently lapses into an elaborate demonstration of the beautiful way in which the Mantuan *does* follow nature. In short, though now and then to "save his face" an illustration is drawn *honoris causa* from Homer, this Second Book on the *ordonnance* of the poem is, till it ceases with a panegyric of Leo X., little more than a descant *On the Imitation of Virgil.*

It cannot be said that the Third Book offers much difference in this respect—though the idolatry of Virgil is in parts a little more disguised. It is, again *more majorum*, devoted to Diction, and, the Muses having been invited to cross the stage once more, our Mentor first reprobates Obscurity. But though you must not be obscure, you may and should be Figurative, and not a few of the best known of our ancient acquaintances the Figures—Metaphor, Hyperbole, Apostrophe, and so forth—are introduced and commended, or sometimes discommended. It is extremely noteworthy that the warnings-off include one far from ugly conceit—

"Aut crines Magnæ Genetricis gramina dicat."

[1] "Drances . . . consiliis non futilis auctor,
Dives opum, pollens lingua et popularibus auris.
. . . Neque enim in Latio magno ore sonantem
Arma ducesque decet tam viles tendere in res."

It is interesting to hear the watchword "Low!" so early.

This, of course, is quite in accordance with the horror of a daring metaphor — of one which runs the risk of seeming "frigid"—which we find prevailing from Aristotle to Longinus, and even in both these great men. To us, most assuredly, the likening of the grass to the tresses of Mother Earth is not in the least absurd, but a very beautiful and poetical phrase, awaking, and adjusting itself aptly to, a train of equally poetical suggestion. But before very long the advice as to the choice of language takes the plain and simple form, "Strip the Ancients!" The poet is bidden to fit

"exuvias veterumque insignia"

to himself; he is to gird himself up to the "theft," and drive the spoil on every occasion. He who trusts to his own wit and invention is unhesitatingly condemned and pitied. If you want to live, to have your works escape decay, you must "steal." Vida repeats the very word over and over again, and without the slightest bashfulness or compunction. He is, however, good enough to admit that, if a new word is absolutely wanted to express something not in the ancients, it may be invented or borrowed — say from Greek — as the older Latins had themselves done. When one word is difficult to find or awkward if found, you must employ Periphrasis. Compounds are permitted to a certain extent (the weakness of Latin and its brood in this respect is well known), but never to a greater than that of two words. *Perterricrepas* is stigmatised by innuendo, though the word itself is Lucretian, and though there is absolutely no principle in the restriction. You are to tone down ill-sounding proper names, as Sicharbas into Sichæus. But in all cases your words are to be entirely subservient to the sense, though they may and should be suited to it—a doctrine which lends itself of course to extensive Virgilian illustration. And so the poem concludes with a peroration of some length, drawing ever and ever closer to, and at last ending in, the laudation of the unrivalled Maro.

Had it not been for the astonishing accuracy with which, as has been said, Vida actually anticipated the dominant critical taste of something like three hundred years, and the creative

taste of about half that period, not many more lines than we have given pages might have been devoted to him. That the poem as a composition is a sufficiently elegant piece of patchwork may of course be freely granted; and it deserves perhaps less grudging praise for the extreme fidelity and ingenuity with which it illustrates its own doctrines. But those doctrines themselves are, whether we look at them in gross or in detail, some of the poorest and most beggarly things to be found in the whole range of criticism. That the prescriptions are practically limited to those necessary for turning out the epic or "heroic" poem does not so much matter—though it is not entirely without significance. Vida's idea of poetry is simply and literally shoddy.[1] That fabric—the fact is perhaps not invariably known to those who use the word—differs from others, not as pinchbeck differs from gold, or cotton from silk, but in being exclusively composed of already manufactured and worn textures which are torn up and passed afresh through mill and loom. And this is the process—and practically the sole process—which Vida enjoins on the poet, going so far as to pronounce anathema on any one who dares to pursue any other.

Essential poverty of its theory.

When it is examined in detail the proceeding may excite even more astonishment, which will be wisely directed not more to the original conception of it than to the extent to which, from what followed, it seems to have hit certain peculiarities in the æsthetic sense of mankind as regards poetry. We may easily go wrong by devoting too much attention to the fact of Vida's individual selection of the poet to whom all other poets are bound *jurare in verba*. It is certain that, from his own day to this, Virgil has appealed to many tastes—and to some of the greatest—secure of his result of being pronounced *altissimo poeta*. Those who like him least cannot but admit that Dante and Tennyson among poets, that Quintilian and Scaliger—nay, that even Boileau—among critics, are not precisely negligible quantities. But the real subject—not merely of astonishment but of reason-

Historical and symptomatic significance.

[1] Some would plead for "mosaic." But the mosaic worker works his tiny cubes *himself*—he does not steal them ready made and arranged.

able and deliberate determination to adopt a position of "No Surrender" in the denial of Vida's position—is this selection of *any* poet, no matter who it may be, as not only a positive pattern of all poetic excellence, but a negative *index expurgatorius* of all poetic delinquency. Not Homer, not Dante, not Shakespeare himself, can be allowed the first position; and the main principle and axiom of all sound Criticism is, that not merely no actual poet, but no possible one, can be allowed the second. This kind of poetical predestination—this fixing of a hard-and-fast type, within which lies all salvation and without which lies none—is utter blasphemy against the poetical spirit. Not only will simple imitation of the means whereby one poet has achieved poetry not suffice to enable another to achieve it, but this suggestion is by far the least dangerous part of the doctrine. It will probably lead to the composition of much bad poetry, but it will not necessarily cause the abortion, or the mistaking when born, of any that is good. The damnatory clauses of the creed must have, and did have, this fatal effect.

The alleged appeal to Reason and Nature.

Vida and those who followed him excused themselves, were accepted by their disciples, and have recently been eulogised by our newest Neo-Classics, as following Nature and Reason. That they said—perhaps that they thought—they followed both is unquestionable.[1] But as a matter of fact their Law of Nature—like the Articles of War in Marryat's novel—was a dead letter, owing to the proviso, from the first more or less clearly hinted at and latterly avowed, that all of Nature that was worth imitating had already been imitated by the ancients. As for the appeal to Reason, it is a mere juggle with words; and it is astonishing that at this time of day any one should be deluded by it. What Reason prescribes Invocations to the Muses? What Reason insists upon beginning at the middle instead of at the beginning? What Reason is there in the preference of the pale *académie* of Drances to the Rembrandt sketch of the demagogue whom Ulysses cudgelled? of the shield of Æneas to the car of Achilles? of Sichæus to Sicharbas? What has Reason to say (more than she has to say against poetic transports altogether) against the exquisite and

[1] Cf. *Poet.*, ii. 162. *Semper nutu rationis eant res.*

endlessly suggestive metaphor of "the tresses of the Mighty Mother" for the grass, with its wave, and its light, and its shadow, and the outline of the everlasting hills and vales as of the sleeping body beneath it? In all these cases, and in a hundred others, we may boldly answer "None and Nothing!" The true Reason—the Mind of the World—has not a word to say against any of these forbidden things, or in favour of any of those preferred ones.

But there is, let it be freely enough granted, a false Reason which has, no doubt, very much to say against the one and in favour of the other. The warped and stunted common-sense, the pedestrian and prosaic matter-of-factness, which is no doubt natural enough in a certain way to mankind, had made little appearance during the Middle Ages. These Ages may be called, if any one chooses, childish, they may be still more justly called fantastic; but they were never prosaic. It might be said of their Time-Spirit as of the albatross, that

"Ses ailes de géant l'empêchent de marcher."

But there was no doubt about the wings. With the Renaissance, prose, in the good sense no doubt as well as in the bad, returned; and as if to revenge itself for the universal employment of poetry during the Middle Ages themselves, it proceeded to lay hands even upon the poet. He might "transport"; with Longinus before them (if Vida had him not, his followers had), they could not very well deny this. But his methods of transporting must be previously submitted to a kind of inspectorship; and anything dangerous or unusual was strictly forbidden. His bolt was not to be "shot too soon nor beyond the moon": he was most particularly *not* to be "of imagination all compact." On the contrary, his imagination was to be alloyed with doses of the commonest common-sense. He might not even imp his wings save with registered feathers, and these feathers were to be neither too long nor too gay.

Such are the principles that we find in Vida, and such their inevitable result. Only let us once more repeat, not merely that he may well, in the admirable words of Lord Foppington, "be proud to belong to so prevailing a party" as the Neo-Classics of

the following three centuries, but that he actually led and almost made that party himself.

A considerable time—more than a quarter of a century—had elapsed between Politian and Vida; but from the appearance of the latter's book to the end of the century not more than three years on the average [1] passed without the appearance of a critical treatise of some importance. Every now and then a short lull would occur; but this was always made up by a greater crowd of writers after the interval. Such "rallies" of criticism (which occurred particularly during the fourth decade [2] of the century, about its very centre,[3] throughout the seventh,[4] eighth,[5] and ninth [6] decades, and just at the end [7]) were no doubt to some extent determined by the academic habits of the Italians, and the readiness with which members of the same academy, or different academies, took up the cudgels against each other. The individual exercises took various forms. A very large part of the work consists of commentaries on Aristotle's *Poetics;* another, closely connected, of set "Arts Poetic," more ostensibly original; some deal with vulgar and some with "regular" poetry, while the concrete and comparative method is by no means neglected, though the abstract and theoretic is on the whole preferred. To attempt classification by kind would be a sacrifice of real to apparent method; and to trace the development of the same ideas in different writers would lead to inextricable confusion and criss-cross reference. We shall probably find it best to follow the rule which has been observed with rare exceptions throughout this History—that of giving the gist

The main stream started.

[1] Mr Spingarn's useful chronological table gives twenty-five books by nearly as many different authors for the seventy-three years. Nor does this list pretend to be exhaustive; for instance, it omits Robortello's *Longinus* (1554), and the important *De poetis nostrorum temporum* of Lilius Giraldus.

[2] Dolce's (1535) translation of Horace; Pazzi's (1536) of Aristotle; Daniello's *Poetica* (1536), and Tolomei's *Versi e Regole* (1539).

[3] Robortello's ed. of *Poetics* (1548), and Segni's translation (1549); Maggi's ed. (1550); Muzio's *Arte Poetica* (1551); Giraldi Cinthio's *Discorsi* (1554).

[4] Minturno's Latin *De Poeta* (1559); Victorius' Aristotle's *Poetics* (1560); Scaliger's own *Poetics* (1561); the completion of Trissino (1563); Minturno's Italian *Arte Poetica* (1564), and Castelvetro's *Poetics* (1570).

[5] The work of Piccolomini and Viperano.

[6] That of Patrizzi, Tasso, and Denores.

[7] That of Buonamici, Ingegneri, and Summo.

of particular books and the opinions of particular authors together, and leaving bird's-eye views to the Interchapters.

Trissino.

Only two years after the appearance of Vida's poem appeared the next critical Italian book of importance, the first instalment of Trissino's *Poetica*. The first instalment —for a singular interval took place between the beginning and the completion of this work. The first four parts were, as has just been said, published in 1529, when the main stream of Italian criticism had hardly begun to flow; the two last not till 1563, two years after the publication of Scaliger's great work, and after a full generation (in the ordinary count) of active discussion of the matters.[1] Such conditions cannot fail to affect the homogeneity of a book. But still Trissino put it forth as one book in different parts, not, as he might very well have done, and as others actually did, as two books; and we are therefore entitled, and indeed bound, with the caution just given, to treat it as a whole. The handsome quartos,[2] well printed and beautifully frontispieced and vignetted, of the standard edition of Trissino's *Opere*, are perhaps, taking them together, rather an ornament to the shelf than a plentiful provision of furniture for the mind. The disadvantages of *versi sciolti* have not often been shown more conspicuously than in the *Italia Liberata*, and the *Sofonisba* has little but its earliness and regularity to plead as a set-off to the general shortcomings of the modern classical Drama. The better repute of Italian comedy would hardly have arisen from such pieces as *I Simillimi;* and the *Rime* are most ordinary things. In our own division he is of some historical account; for it is impossible not to be grateful to the first publisher of the *De Vulgari Eloquio*, and that praise of earliness, which he has earned in more than one respect, must be extended to the first four parts of the *Poetica*. He boasts justly enough that nobody, save Dante and Antonio da Tempo, was before him, and that both of these had written in Latin.

[1] Some, however, if not all, of this latter part had been written fourteen or fifteen years earlier, in 1548-49. Even this, however, leaves a twenty years' gap, which Trissino attributes to the composition of his great (or at any rate large) poem on the Goths.

[2] 2 vols., Verona, 1729.

Trissino does not, in his first instalment, busy himself with those abstract discussions which were soon to furnish the staple of Italian criticism. He adopts Aristotle's "Imitation" briefly and without cavil or qualification; and then passes, in his First Part or "Division," to the question of choosing your language, in which he generally follows Dante, but with an adaptation to the time. It is not with him a question of *making* an "Illustrious Vulgar Tongue," an "Italian," but of calling by that name one already adopted. In his further remarks on Diction he sometimes borrows, and often expands or supplements, the very words of Dante at first, and then passes to elaborate discussion, with examples, of the qualities of speech—Clearness, Grandeur, Beauty, Swiftness. Next he deals with what he calls the *costume*—character, *ethos*, suiting of style to person—with truth, artifice, and what he calls the "fashions"—that is to say, the alterations of quantity, &c., by dwelling, slurring, syncope, and the like. The arrangement of this First Division is not very logical; but, as we have seen, cross-division has been the curse of rhetorical-formal discussion of the kind from a very early period to the present day. The Second Division deals with pure prosody, the division of feet, shortening (*rimozione*), as in *ciel* for *cielo*, elision, cæsura, &c.; the Third with arrangement of verses and stanzas; the Fourth with the complete forms of Sonnet, Ballata, and Canzone, the sub-varieties of which were detailed with great care and plentiful examples.

Division of his Poetic.

Here what might more properly be called the First Part, consisting of these four divisions, ends; the long subsequent Second Part (made up of the Fifth and Sixth Divisions) has a separate Preface-dedication referring to the gap. These parts are not, like the others, divided into sections with headings; and, doubtless on the pattern if not of any one particular treatise, of the spirit of many which had gone between, they deal with general questions. The Imitation theory is handled at some length, and with citation of Plato as well as of Aristotle; the kinds of poetry are treated on a more general standard, and not with mere reference to the rules of constructing each. The larger part of the Fifth Division is given entirely to

Tragedy: the Sixth begins with that Heroic Poem which was so much on the mind of the country and the century. But it ends chiefly on Figures—the formal heart of Trissino, long-travelled as it has been, fondly turning to its old loves at the last.

His critical value.

The contents of the treatise or treatises, especially if we take them with Trissino's attempts to introduce the Greek Omega and the Greek Epsilon into Italian spelling, his grammatical "Doubts," and his later "Introduction to Grammar," his dialogue *Il Castellano*, and so forth,[1] will show his standpoint with sufficient clearness. It is almost purely formal in the minor, not to say the minim, kinds of form. He is indeed credited by some with a position of importance, in the history of the Unities. He is, they say, the first to refer to the observance of the Unity of Time as a distinction from "ignorant poets,"[2] giving therewith a disparaging glance at mediæval drama.[3] But this overlooks the fact that he is simply repeating what Aristotle says, with an addition much more likely[4] to refer to non-Humanist contemporaries than to the almost forgotten "mystery." His theory of the Heroic Poem, like his practice in the *Italia Liberata*, is slavishly Aristotelian. The chief evidence of real development that I can find is in his treatment of Comedy, where the extremely rapid and contemptuous dismissal of the Master called imperatively for some supplement, considering the popularity of the kind in the writer's own time and country. Possibly reinforcing Aristotle here with Cicero, and certainly using the famous *Suave mari magno* of Lucretius, he succeeds in putting together a theory of the ludicrous to which, or to some subsequent developments of it in Italy, Hobbes's "passion of sudden

[1] All these, with the *Poetica* and the translation of Dante, will be found in the second volume of the edition cited. I take the opportunity of correcting an injustice to Trissino which I committed at i. 417, and which was brought to my notice by a reviewer in the *Athenæum*. "Giovan- [or Giam-] battista Doria" *does* say, in his dedication to the Cardinal de' Medici, that Dante wrote it in Latin, adding, however, a clause of such singular obscurity that at first sight one takes it as meaning that Dante *himself* translated the book into Italian. For discussion of this see Rajna's ed. of the *De V. E.*, p. li *sq.*

[2] II. 95. Perhaps better "unlearned," *indotti Poeti*.

[3] Spingarn, p. 92.

[4] *Et ancor oggi si fa.*

glory" has been[1] not unjustly traced. The "sudden" seems indeed to be directly due to Maggi, a critic who will be presently mentioned with other commentators on the *Poetics*. And Maggi had published long before Trissino's later Divisions appeared, though, it may be, not before they were written.[2]

The growth during the interval had been of three kinds, sometimes blended, sometimes kept apart. The first kind consisted of translations, editions, and commentaries of and on the *Poetics*; the second, of abstract discussions of Poetry; the third, of more or less formal "Arts" not very different from Trissino's own. The first class produced later, in the work of Castelvetro, a contribution of almost the first importance to the History and to the Art of Criticism; and it could not but exercise a powerful influence. It belongs, however, in all but its most prominent examples (such as that just referred to, which will be fully discussed in the next chapter), rather to monographers on Aristotle than to general historians of Criticism, inasmuch as it is mainly parasitic. Before any book of original critical importance later than Trissino's had been issued, in 1536,[3] Alessandro de' Pazzi published a Latin translation of the *Poetics*, which for some time held the position of standard, and a dozen years later came three important works on the book—Robortello's edition of 1548, Segni's Italian translation of 1549, and Maggi's edition of 1550—all showing the attention and interest which the subject was exciting, while, still before the later "Divisions" of Trissino appeared, Vettori in 1560 added his edition, of greater importance than any earlier one. Long before this the book had become a regular subject of lectures. Of these writers Robortello, and still more Vettori ("Victorius"), were of the greatest service to the text; Maggi, who was assisted by Lombardi, to the discussion of the matter.[4]

Editors, &c., of the Poetics.

Pazzi.

[1] Spingarn, p. 102.

[2] The discussion occupies nearly four quarto pages, ii. 127-130. Trissino, of course, does not neglect Quintilian's handling of the subject in *Inst.*, vi. 3, and he quotes modern as well as ancient examples.

[3] Dolce had translated the *Ars Poetica* of Horace into Italian the year before.

[4] Mr Spingarn has extracted from MS., and published as an appendix to his book, an interesting review of these commentators and others, by Leonardo Salviati, a successor of theirs in 1586, and too famous in the Tasso controversy.

In the critical handling of these editors and commentators we find, as we should expect, much of the old rhetorical trifling. For all their scorn, expressed or implied, of the Middle Ages, they repeat the distinctions of *poetica*, *poesis*, *poeta*, and *poema*[1] as docilely as Martianus, or a student of Martianus, could have done a thousand or five hundred years before, and they hand it on too as a sort of charmed catchword to Scaliger[2] and Jonson.[3] But brought face to face as they are with the always weighty, though by no means always transparently clear, doctrines of Aristotle, and self-charged with the duty of explaining and commenting them, they cannot, if they would, escape the necessity of grappling with the more abstract and less merely technological questions. Robortello,[4] like Maggi, though less elaborately, has a theory of the ludicrous. Both, and others, necessarily grapple with that *crux* of the *katharsis* which has not yet ceased to be crucial. Both, with Segni, discuss the Unity of Time and differ about it; though none of the three has yet discovered (as indeed it is not discoverable in Aristotle or Aristotle's literary documents) the yet more malignant Unity of Place. Vettori would extend the cramp in time (not of course with the twenty-four hours' limit) from tragedy to epic. Most of them have arrived at that besotment as to "verisimilitude" which is responsible for the worst parts of the Neo-Classic theory, and which, in the pleasant irony common to all entanglements with Duessas of the kind, makes the unfortunate lovers guilty of the wildest excesses of artificial improbability. And in all, whether they project their reflections on their text into more general forms or not, we can see the gradual crystallising of a theory of poetry, heroic, or dramatic, or general.

Robortello, Segni, Maggi, Vettori.

Nor was such theory left without direct and independent exposition during the period which we are considering. The first author of one is generally taken to be Daniello, whose *Poetica* appeared in 1536; and I have not discovered any earlier claimant. I do not quite understand

Theorists: Daniello.

[1] Maggi in his commentary. See Spingarn, p. 27.

[2] *V. infra*, p. 71.

[3] *Discoveries, sub fin.* (iii. 419 of Cunningham's 3 vol. ed.)

[4] On him see also note *infra*, pp. 49, 50.

how Mr Spingarn has arrived at the conclusion that "in Daniello's theory of tragedy there is no single Aristotelian element," especially as he himself elsewhere acknowledges the close—almost verbal—adherence of this early writer to the Stagirite. But it is probably true that Daniello was thinking more of the Platonic objections and of following out the Boccaccian defence, than of merely treading in the footprints of Aristotle. He is the first, since Boccaccio himself, to undertake that generous, if rather wide and vague as well as superfluous, "defence of poesy" which many Italians repeated after him, and which was repeated after them by our Elizabethans, notably by Sir Philip Sidney.

As his little book is somewhat rare, and as it has such good claims to be among the very earliest vernacular disputations of a general character on poetry in Italy, if not also in Europe, it may be well to give some account of it. My copy has no title-page, but dates itself by a colophon on the *recto* of the errata-leaf at the end, with a veto-privilege, by concession of the Pope, the seignory of Venice, and *all* the other princes and lords of Italy, advertised by Giovan Antonio di Nicolini da Sabio, Venice, 1536. It fills 136 small pages of italic type, and is in dialogue form, rather rhetorically but not inelegantly written, and dedicated by Bernardo Daniello of Lucca to Andrea Cornelio, Bishop-Elect of Brescia. Daniello does refer to Aristotle, and borrows (not perhaps quite intelligently) from him; but his chief sources are the Latins, and he sets or resets, with no small interest for us, that note of apology for the Poets against Plato which was to dominate Italian criticism, and after exercising some, but less, effect on French, to be strenuously echoed in England. There are some rather striking things in Daniello. He is sound enough on the mission of the poet as being to delight (though he is to teach too) and also to persuade—the ancient union of Poetics and limited Rhetoric evidently working in him. On the relations of poetry and philosophy he might be echoing Maximus Tyrius and Boccaccio, and very likely is thinking of the latter. But he strikes a certain cold into us by remarking that Dante (whom he nevertheless admires very much) was perhaps greater and more perfect as a philosopher than as a poet; and it does not seem likely that he

was aware of the far-reaching import of his own words when he lays it down (p. 26) that Invention, Disposition, and Elocution being the three important things, the poet is not, as some think, limited to any special matter. If he had meant this, of course he would have come to one of those *arcana* of criticism which are even yet revealed, as matter of serene conviction, to very few critics. But he pretty certainly did not fully understand his own assertion; and indeed slurs it off immediately afterwards. After taking some examples from Dante and more from Petrarch, Daniello adopts (again prophetically) the doctrine that the Poet must practically know all arts and sciences, in order that he may properly deal with his universal subject. He is specially to study what is called in Latin *Decorum* and in Italian *Convenevolezza*. Tragedy and Comedy are to be rigidly distinguished. And so this curious First Blast of the Trumpet of sixteenth-century vernacular criticism is emphatic against the confusion which was to bring about the mightiest glories of sixteenth-century literature. A large part of the small treatise is taken up with examples, in the old rhetorical manner of qualities, "colours," figures, &c. The whole of the latter part of the First Book consists of these, as does almost the whole of the Second, with an extension into verbal criticism of the passages cited as illustrating kinds, technical terms, and the like. Indeed the general considerations are chiefly to be found in the first forty or fifty pages; and it is really remarkable how much there is in this short space which practically anticipates in summary the ideas of most of the much more voluminous writers who follow.[1]

Fracastoro.

Fracastoro, physician, logician, and not ungraceful poet of the graceless subject of *Syphilis*, deals with both Plato and Aristotle in his dialogue *Naugerius*, and discourses deeply on the doctrine of Imitation, the Theory of Beauty, the

[1] M. Breitinger (*Les Unités d'Aristote avant Corneille*, p. 7) says, "ce livre n'est qu'un commentaire du *Canzoniere* de Pétrarque." He can hardly have read it; and most probably confused it with the *Spositione* by Daniello which accompanies an edition of Petrarch (Venice, 1549), and had been partially published eight years earlier. This is a full but rather wooden commentary, chiefly interesting to contrast with Castelvetro's, and as showing the Italian tendency to expatiate rather than to appreciate.

Aristotelian conception of the poet as more universal and philosophical than the historian, and the Platonic objection to the intervals between poetry and truth. This dialogue,[1] however (the full title is *Naugerius sive de Poetica*, its chief interlocutor being Andrea Navagero, the best follower of Catullus in Renaissance Latin [2]), tells a certain tale by its coupling with another, *Turrius sive de Intellectione*. It is wholly philosophical in intent and drift: it is perhaps the very "farthest"—comparatively early (1555) as is its date—of those Italian excursions, in the direction of making Criticism an almost wholly abstract and *a priori* subject, which balance the unblushing "Convey—do nothing but convey," of Vida and his followers. One of its very earliest axioms (p. 324 *ed. cit. infra*) is that "qui recte dicere de hac re velit, prius sciat necesse est, quænam poetæ natura est, quidque ipsa poetica, tum et quis philosophi genius," &c. It must be admitted that Fracastoro is among the very ablest and most thoroughgoing explorers of these altitudes. No one has more clearly grasped, or put more forcibly, than he has that compromise between Plato and Aristotle which has been and will be mentioned so often as characteristic of the Italian thinkers in this kind. Indeed, the fifty pages of his Dialogue are almost a *locus classicus* for the first drawing up of the creed which converted Sidney, and to which Milton, indocile to creeds as he was, gave scarcely grudging allegiance. It is full, too, of interest in deliverances on minor points—the difference between the orator and the rhetor (p. 343), the shaping of a particular kind of "orator" into a poet, his universality and his usefulness, the limits of his permitted fiction and the character of his charm. But Fracastoro is wholly in these generals: it is much if he permits himself a rare illustration from an actual poet.

And always in these writers we find the old deviations, the old red herrings drawn across the scent. Fracastoro himself, reasonable as he is in many ways, falls into the foolish old fallacy that a good poet must be a good man, and the less obviously

[1] *Fracastorii Opera*, 2 vols., Lyons, 1591. The *Naugerius* is at i. 319-365.

[2] A few of these poems of Navagero will be found in Pope's *Selecta Poemata Italorum* (Londoni, 1740); more in the Oxford Selection (1808); most in *Carmina Quinque Illustrium Poetarum* (Florence, 1552).

ridiculous but still mischievous demand from him of the all-accomplished acquirements once asked of the rhetorician.

Putting aside, for the moment, such rather later and much more important works as the *Discorsi* of Giraldi Cinthio, the *De Poetis Nostrorum Temporum* of his half-namesake Lilius Giraldus, and the two capital treatises of Minturno, one of which appeared after Trissino's book, we may give a few words to two Italian tractates, the *Versi e Regole della Nuova Poesia Toscana* of Claudio Tolomei (1539) and Muzio's or Mutio's Italian verse *Arte Poetica*, which was published with some other work in 1551.[1] The last is noteworthy as an early example of the vernacular critical poem—a kind suggested by Horace, and illustrated later by Boileau and Pope, but certainly more honoured by its practitioners than in itself. Yet it would not be just to deny Mutio a high if rather vague conception of poetry, and, in particular, a most salutary conviction that the poet must *dis*realise his subjects. Tolomei's book, on the other hand, challenges attention as probably the beginning of that pestilent heresy of "classical metres" which, arising in Italy, and tainting France but slightly (as was natural considering the almost unquantified character of the modern French language), fastened with virulence upon England, affected some of our best wits, and was within measurable distance of doing serious harm. The plague was so much at its worst with us that the chapter on Elizabethan Criticism will be the proper place for its discussion. But though Ascham himself thought it no plague at all, it was certainly one of the very worst of these "Italianations" to which he objected so violently; and Tolomei was its first prophet in the country of its origin.

Formalists: Mutio. Tolomei and classical metres.

Not a few names, some famous in European literature for other performances of their bearers, some almost unknown

[1] *Rime Diverse* (Venice, f. 68-94). The name on the title-page is Mutio, and the spelling Muzio, which some books have, may lead to confusions; for there appears to be another *Rime Diverse* of Muzio four years earlier, which does not contain the *Arte*. This is in blank-verse, agreeably written, with some general observations on Poets and Poetry, Ancient and Modern, and practical enough. Says Mutio, *e.g.*,—

La catena
Di Dante non e leggiadra, se non
Fa punto con la terza sua rima.

except to the student of this subject, fall into one or other of these classes, or, as very commonly happens, qualify in an undecided manner for two, or for all. As early as 1545 Tomitano[1] had dwelt on the above-mentioned fallacy of the necessary learning of poets: Lionardi,[2] nine years later, in a pair of Dialogues expressly devoted to *Poetic Invention*, extended this in the widest and wildest manner, so that the poet becomes a perfect good-man-of-the-Stoics—an all-round and impeccable Grandison-Aristotle. The same idea and others were emitted by Bernardo Tasso, good father of a great son, who not only practised poetry to the vast extent of the *Amadigi*, but discussed it in a formal *Ragionamento* of the subject.[3] Later, Capriano[4] gave the more elaborate exaltation of poetry as a sort of Art of Arts, combining and subduing to its own purpose all forms of Imitation, and following up Vida's superfine objections to Homer as trivial and undignified, and his rapturous exaltation of the "decency" of Virgil. This book, very short, is also rather important—more so than might be judged from some accounts of it. It is neither paged, nor numbered in folio, but does not extend beyond signature F ii. of a small quarto, with a brief appendix of Italian verse. There are eight chapters—the first

Others: Tomitano, Lionardi, B. Tasso, Capriano.

[1] *Della Lingua Toscana.* The four Books of this are rather empty things. The first goes to show that Philosophy is necessary to the perfect orator; the second that it is equally necessary to the perfect poet; the third that Rhetoric is useful for writing and speaking with eloquence; while the fourth discusses oratorical diction and its ornaments. Few of the books cited here better justify De Quincey's too sweeping ban.

[2] *Due Dialogi dell' Inventione Poetica di Alessandro Lionardi* (Venice, 1554). No one carries the *ventosa loquacitas* about the origin of laws, and virtues, and opinions, and what not, farther than Lionardi; no one is more set on defining "*the* Historian," "*the* Orator," "*the* Poet," &c.; no one pays more attention to all the abstractions. At p. 18 he has a curious catalogue, occupying the greater part of a small quarto page, and capable of being extended to a large folio, or many large folios, of "subjects" and "effects," in regard to history, enmity, discord, war, peace; in short, all the contents of the dictionary. "Perdonatemi," says another interlocutor, "se interrompo i vostri ragionamenti," and indeed they might have gone on for ever. But the new man has his catalogue ready, too.

[3] Venice, 1562. It is very short and very general. There are some literary touches in his *Lettere* (2 vols., Venice, 1562), especially a correspondence with Cinthio on the *Amadigi*.

[4] *Della Vera Poetica*, Venice, 1555.

discussing what things are imitable and what imitation is; the second vindicating for poetry the portion of supreme imitative art; the third dividing it into "natural" and "moral"; the fourth arguing that Epic or Heroic (not, as Aristotle thinks, drama) is the highest kind of "moral" poetry; the fifth containing, among other things, an interesting revolt against Greek; the sixth discoursing on number and sound; the seventh exalting the good poem above everything; and the eighth rapidly discussing the origin, rank, necessity, parts, force, end, &c., of Poetry. Capriano does not give himself much room, and fails, like most of these critics, in the all-important connection of his theories with actual work; but he must have been a man of no common independence and force of thought.[1]

Il Lasca.

More important than these to us, though less technically critical, and therefore in some cases commending themselves less to students of the subject from some points of view, are some poets and men of letters of the earlier and middle parts of the century who have touched critical subjects. I should myself regard the Prologues[2] of Grazzini ("Il Lasca")—in which he repeatedly and unweariedly protests against the practice of moulding Italian comedy upon Plautus and Terence, regardless of the utter change in manners, and so forth—as worth shelves full of "in-the-air" treatises. For this application of the *speculum vitæ*[3] notion, the idea of *The Muses' Looking-glass*, which was obtained from Cicero through Donatus, was the salvation of the time, keeping Comedy at least free from the fossilising influences of the false Imitation. Although the unwary might reasonably take the author of the famous caution not to read St Paul for fear of spoiling style (there are at least half-a-dozen of the greatest pieces of style in the world to be found in the two *Epistles to the Corinthians* alone) as

[1] His volume appears to be almost *introuvable* for sale; but the British Museum has no less than three copies. I wish it would give me one of them.

[2] Especially in those to *La Strega* and *l'Arzigoglio* (*Commedie di A. Grazzini*, ed. Fanfani, Florence, 1897), pp. 173 and 435. Gelli and others do much the same.

[3] The proper quotation is *imitatio vitæ, speculum consuetudinis, imago veritatis.* It is given as early as by Robortello (see note opposite). But with that intelligent operation of the *communis sensus* which pedants dislike, *speculum vitæ* was what took the general.

either a silly practitioner of undergraduate paradox or a serious dolt, yet the *Della Volgar Lingua* of Bembo[1] is by no possibility to be neglected in taking account of the critical attitude of Italy at the time. It is of course too purist and "precious"; it "sticks in the letter" to a perilous extent; but there is real appreciation in it of what the writer can appreciate, and among the things that he can appreciate are good and great things. Annibale Caro has (and deserves) a bad name, not merely for the unfair manner in which he carried on his controversy with Castelvetro (see next chapter), but for the tedious logomachy of the controversy itself, which on his side, besides filling a regular *Apologia* and other pieces, overflows constantly into his letters.[2] But this very controversy testifies to the zest and the undoubted sincerity with which literary matters were dealt with by the Italians, and it served further as a starting-point for the elaborate *Ercolano*[3] of Varchi, who in divers lectures, &c., also dealt with the more abstract questions of the nature of poetry, the status of the poet, and the like. In short, the documents on the subject have already reached the condition referred to by the warning given in the introductory chapter to the first volume of this book, that while in that volume we had to search for and discuss every scrap bearing on the subject, here large classes of document would have to be treated by summary and representation only.

Bembo.

Caro.

Varchi.

Moreover, great as are the volume and the intensity of Italian attention to criticism in the years between 1535 and 1560, the Devil's Advocate may, without mere cavilling, cast disparagement upon most of its expressions. The dealings of the scholars with the subject are no doubt to a certain extent accidental or obligatory; they might have bestowed, and in fact actually did bestow,[4] at least equal pains on texts not directly, or not

[1] In *Prose Scelte di P. Bembo*, ed. Costero (Milan, 1880), pp. 141-278.

[2] Ed. Costero, 2 vols. (Milan, 1879-and 1884).

[3] Ed. Costero (Milan, 1888).

[4] Robortello edited Ælian and Æschylus as well as Longinus and Aristotle; Petrus Victorius was busied very widely with the classics. The combined treatment of Aristotle and Horace by the former in his *Explicationes* (Basle, 1555) is distinctly noteworthy. His dealings with the Greek are almost pure commentary; those with the Ro-

at all, concerning criticism. The work of Tolomei is merely an example of those Puckish tricks which something sometimes plays on the human intellect; that of Muzio a dilettante exercise mainly. The treatises of the others from Daniello to Varchi hover between abstract discussion, which sometimes approaches twaddle, dilettante trifling which makes the same approach on another side, and an estimable, but for literature at large comparatively unimportant, guerilla about the virtues and qualities, the vices and defects, of the Italian language—a language which had already seen its very best days, and was settling down to days very far from its best. The three authors to whom we shall now come, and who will occupy us to the end of this chapter, escape, in one way or another, the brunt of all these grudgements. Minturno supplies us with the most wide-ranging and systematic handlings of poetry in its general, and of "regular" and "vulgar" poetry in their particular, aspects that had yet been produced, Giraldi Cinthio with some of the most original critical essays, Lilius Giraldus with a survey of the poetical, and to some extent the literary, state of Europe in his

man, though called a "Paraphrase," are much freer. He begins with a sort of expository lecture on the *Epistola ad Pisones*, introducing most of its matter and much illustration from other authors. Then separate short essays follow on Satire, Epigram, Comedy, *Sales*, and Elegy. The heading "Sales" is especially worthy of attention as illustrating that tormenting preoccupation of the classics on Wit, which transmitted itself to the Renaissance, and is found in moderns as recent as Whately. Robortello exercised much authority, and is shown by M. Morel-Fatio in his recent edition of Lope de Vega's *Arte Nuevo* (*v. infra*, p. 343) to have furnished the Spanish poet with much, if not most, of the miscellaneous erudition which he displays to no great purpose. Robortello's earlier *editio princeps* of Longinus (ibid., 1554) is noteworthy in a different way. He was by no means more modest than the average Renaissance scholar; on the contrary, he is accused of special arrogance. But this *opus redivivum, antea ignotum, e tenebris in lucem editum*, as he calls it, seems to have puzzled, if not actually abashed, him. He has no introduction, no regular commentary: only side-headings of the matter, from which, he says, "all the method of the book, and the order of the questions treated, and the whole rationale of the teaching," and much else, can be learnt. The spirit was too potent for him who had called it up. Of other mainly classical commentators, Riccoboni (*Compendium Artis Poeticæ*, 1591) is again useful, because he combines Horace and Aristotle, and practicalises the combination, identifying the Aristotelian or pseudo-Aristotelian (see vol. i. p. 34) "Episode" with the first Four Acts, the Exodus with the Fifth, &c. Maggi, Segni, Zabarella are even farther from our sphere.

time, for the like of which we may look in vain before and not too successfully since.

Minturno.

Antonio Sebastiano, called Minturno (which is stated—I know not with what correctness—in a MS. note in my copy of the *Arte Poetica* to be merely an "academic" surname), is a good example of that combination of scholastic thoroughness and diligence with wider range of study which honourably distinguishes the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, but which, save in rare instances, went out in the later years of the last-named age, and has too seldom been recovered since. In 1559 he produced a *De Poeta* and in 1563 an *Arte Poetica*, one of which, as the respective titles imply, is written in Latin and the other in Italian, but which are by no means replicas of each other with the language changed. Both were printed at Venice; and though they came from different presses, they range very well together, both being in a smallish quarto, but with very close type, so that the 560 odd pages of the *De Poeta* and the 450 odd of the *Arte* contain between them a vast amount of matter. The plans of the two treatises—which are allotted naturally according to their language, the Latin to poetry in general and to classical verse, the Italian to its own kind—are not strikingly but slightly different. The *De Poeta*, which is addressed to Ettore Pignatelli, Duke of Bivona, takes the time-honoured form of a symposium or dialogue, the persons being the poet Sannazar (who is always introduced by his Latin names of Actius Syncerus) and his friends, and the scene the famous Villa Mergellina. Indeed, Minturno seems to have written the book at Naples, whence he dates it a year before that of its appearance. In the later work he himself is the principal speaker, his antagonists or interlocutors being Vespasiano Gonzaga in the First book, Angelo Costanzo in the Second, Bernardino Rote in the Third, and Ferrante Carafa in the Fourth. The dialogue-form, it may also be mentioned, is less, and that of the formal treatise more, prominent in the *Arte*.

Both volumes have the invaluable accompaniment of side-notes—an accompaniment which not only makes the writer's point more easily intelligible to the reader, but prevents the

writer himself from straying. But the *De Poeta* is not furnished with either Contents or Index, while the *Arte* is liberally provided with both. This, in the first case, is to be regretted, not merely because the book is much the longer of the two, but because the indulgences of the dialogic form are more fully taken in it. After a suitable beginning (with a *fons* and a *platanus* and other properties), the subject is opened with a panegyric of poetry. The origins of literature were in verse; all nations practised it. A more sensible line is taken (it will be understood that the interlocutors of course take different views, and one judges by the general drift) on the subject of the all-accomplishment of the poets, than is the case with some of the writers above mentioned; but Minturno points out (which is no doubt true enough) that poetry in a manner "holds all the Arts in fee," can draw upon and dignify all. On the connection of verse with poetry he holds a middle position, close to that of Aristotle himself, and not very different from that long after taken up by Coleridge in the *Biographia Literaria*. He will not pronounce verse essential to poetry, but evidently thinks that poetry would be extremely foolish to dispense with its practically inseparable companion. The consecrated procession of poets from Amphion and Orpheus to Homer and even Virgil is set a-going as usual. Then the discussion, after a little skirmishing, settles down at p. 22 to the question of Imitation; and, amid much scholastic subdivision of its kinds and manners, the delight produced by this is very strongly insisted on. Next, the Platonic onslaught is discussed, and urged or repelled by turns; the defence being clearly the author's side, and maintained with considerable vigour, and with plentiful examples from Homer and Virgil both. The line taken, however, leads Minturno to lay stress on the *instructive* power of poetry. The poet's purpose will, he holds, govern his imitation, and direct it so as to excite admiration in the reader or hearer. This is possibly the source of the next-century endeavour to elevate Admiration to the level of Pity and Terror themselves.[1] Hence Minturno is constrained to share the idea

The De Poeta.

[1] Let, however, the reader beware of being misled by the occurrence of the *word* "Admiratio" in the side-notes of pp. 52, 53. It is used in quite a different sense.

of the necessarily virtuous character of the poet: and, except that he never separates the *delectare* from the *prodesse* altogether, he hugs the dangerous shore of the *hérésie de l'enseignement* too closely in his endeavour to escape the Platonic privateers. By degrees the discussion glides into the comparison of Epic and Tragedy, and the question whether Poetry is a matter of Art or of Inspiration—and decides that it is both. And the First Book ends with the pronouncement that a good poet must be a good man, but that he may sometimes deal with not-good things.

The Second begins with one of the demonstrations (which to us seem otiose, but which were very important, not merely to the ideas of the age, but as bulwarks against the Puritan and Utilitarian objections of all times) that the poets, especially Homer and Virgil, are masters, whether necessarily or not, of all the liberal arts and of philosophy as well. When we remember the Philistine anti-poetics of Locke much more than a century after Minturno's time—nay, the still existing, if lurking, idea that "great poet" must be (as somebody asserts that it is or was in Irish slang) synonym for "utter fool"[1]—we shall not bear too hardly on our author. But this discussion, in its turn, is bid to "come up higher." What is to be the *Institutio Poetæ?* What is he to do and learn that he may in turn (p. 102) "delight, teach; *transport.*"[2]

In all cases the admiration of the reader or hearer (p. 104) must follow. But it will be obtained not quite in the same way as by the orator, and with a difference in the different kinds of poetry. The parts of a poem, too, are dealt with in a more or less Aristotelian manner, but with large additions and substitutions, in view of the greater range of literature that Minturno has before him, and of the desire specially to bring in Virgil, of whom our critic, though not quite such a fanatical partisan as Vida and Scaliger, is a hearty admirer (see for instance p. 135). All the "parts" have more or less attention in this book, both with reference to the different "kinds,"

[1] Perhaps, if this be true, the Irish got it from their French friends of the seventeenth century, among whom, according to the *Ménagiana*, *poeta regius* was the correct title of the King's Fool.

[2] Ut doceat, ut delectet, ut moveat. Suggested by Cicero on the orator.

especially epic and "heroic," and also with regard to those general principles of poetry which Minturno never forgets. The Third Book of nearly 100 pages is directly devoted to tragedy; and Minturno pursues in reference to this the same plan of following, but with a certain independence and a great deal of expatiation, in Aristotelian footsteps. He still lays great stress on Admiration; and it is really curious that in thus forestalling, no doubt, Corneille's teaching, he has by anticipation hit at Racine and the *doucereux* in a phrase[1] which has been fairly guessed to have supplied Milton with a famous one[2] of his own. He does not pay so much attention to the *crux* of the *katharsis* (on which most of these critics necessarily dwell more or less) in this treatise as in the *Arte* (*v. infra*).

The Fourth Book, even longer than the Third, is, like it, entirely devoted to one subject; and the change of modern as compared with ancient view is shown strongly by the fact that this subject is Comedy. The admirers of Plautus and Terence, the countrymen of Ariosto and Machiavelli, could not, indeed, be expected to turn from Comedy with the disdainful shoulder of Aristotle; but such elaborate treatment as this shows the hold which the subject had obtained. Yet it is ominous that Minturno devotes especial attention to the subject of types; though, in accordance with his usual practice, he gives much space to a general treatment of the Ludicrous and its sources. There is also a good deal of curious detail in this Book as to costume and theatrical arrangements generally. The Fifth turns to Lyric, and sets forth its different kinds, including Satire among them. And the Sixth deals with Diction and Prosody, the section allotted to the latter being comparatively short and interspersed between two on Style, proceeding of course a good deal by Figures, though not in the most cut-and-dried manner, and illustrated (as indeed are all the later Books) by abundant and unceasing quotation. It may

[1] P. 173. *Amatorio mollique sermone effeminat.* See Spingarn, p. 70. It should, however, be observed that Minturno is here avowedly expressing the censure of Aristophanes on Euripides rather than his own opinion.

[2] "Vain and amatorious."

be observed that, as perhaps might be expected, the dialogue-character disappears in them more and more, and the book takes the form of a simple exposition by one or other of the personages. This change prepares us for the arrangement of the *Arte*.

This book, as dates given and to be given show, was published subsequently to the appearance of Scaliger's *Poetic*, and may have been to some extent influenced by it; but I do not think that Minturno, who mentions Trissino and Bembo and Tolomei, ever refers to it, and he does not give one the idea of a man who would conceal debts. In fact, his work upon the same subject had been completed earlier. In this he has necessarily to go over some of the same ground; but, as noted above, he repeats very little. He starts with a general definition of poetry as an imitation of various manners and persons in various modes, either with words or with harmonies or with "times" separately, or with all these things together, or with part of them. Other ternaries follow, as matter, instrument, and mode; manners, affections, and deeds; suprahuman, human, and infrahuman; personages; words, music, and "times"; epic, scenic, and melic; prose, verse, and mixed narrative. These distinctions are put forth in an orderly manner, but succinctly and without the discussion which is a feature of the general parts of the *De Poeta*, Minturno evidently thinking that he has sufficiently cleared the ground in that work. After some further exposition of forms, &c., the handling is more specially directed to Epic (*i.e.*, narrative generally), and its parts and conditions are expounded, still with a certain swiftness, but at greater length than before. And once more, the treatment concentrates itself—this time upon Romance. The origin of the name and thing is lightly touched, and then the great question is broached,[1] "Is Romance poetry?" Minturno will not refuse it the name; but he cannot admit that it is the same kind of poetry as that of which Aristotle and Horace have spoken. The contrarieties of

The Arte Poetica.

[1] Minturno mentions neither Cinthio (*v. infra*) nor Pigna—probably to avoid the appearance of direct attack; but he must have been thinking of one or the other or both. Something the same line was taken by Sperone Speroni.

Romance and Heroic poetry are then carefully examined; and while much praise is given to Ariosto, some fault is found with him, and the mantle of the *Odyssey* is especially refused him. In fact, Minturno holds generally that the Romance is a defective *form* of poetry, ennobled by the excellence of some of its writers—a sort of middle position which is very noteworthy. But he hardens his heart against the irresistible historical and inductive argument which the defenders of the Romance had already discovered, and will have it that the laws of poetry are antecedent to poetic production (p. 32). And for his main style of narrative poetry he returns to Epic or "Heroic" proper, and discusses it on the old lines of Plot, Character, Manners, Passions or Affections, &c., always with modern examples from the great Italian poets. He also makes the very important, but very disastrous, suggestion that the Christian religion provides all the necessary "machinery" of Heroic,—a suggestion which was elaborately followed out by Tasso and by Milton and by many a lesser man, and which Dryden had thought of following, though he luckily did not.[1]

The Second Book takes up Drama in the same manner, but—as was always made legitimate by the parasitic character of at least Italian Tragedy—with much more reference to ancient and less to modern writers. The Third Book deals with Lyric, the same inclusion of Satire which we have noticed in the *De Poeta* being made; and the Fourth with Poetic Diction, Prosody, &c., still on the lines of the earlier treatise, but with entire adaptation to the Italian subject. The latter books, as is natural, are much more meticulous in their arrangement, descending, with complete propriety, to the minutest details of rhyme and metre, as well as, where necessary, of grammar. But Minturno never loses an opportunity of ascending to the higher and more general considerations—the nature of harmony, the origin and quality of rhyme, &c., the characters of kinds, and even, to some extent, of authors. It is characteristic of him to give an elaborate discussion of the Italian alphabet letter by letter from the poetical point of view, and to strike off from this to a consideration of the relations of

[1] See next Book, p. 369.

Italian, Latin, and foreign modern languages, the general methods of elevating style, and the question whether there ought to be completely separate diction for poetry and prose.

Their value.

It is the presence of this contrast, or combination, in him which, as much as anything else, has determined more attention in this place to Minturno than to some other authors before noticed. In combination of thoroughness and range he seems to me to hold a position both high and rather solitary. He has not quite the elaborate system of Scaliger, but then he is much less one-eyed; he is less original—has less *diable au corps*—than Castelvetro, but he is far less eccentric and incalculable. His unfeigned belief in the noble and general theories of poetry and the poet is set off by his sedulous attention to particulars, as his attention to particulars is by his escapes of relief into the region of generalisation, and by his all-important addition of "transport" to "teach" and "delight." He has not reached—he has in fact declined—the historical antinomianism of Patrizzi (*v.* next chap.); but that was inevitable, since this view was in part a reaction from the movement which he represented, in part a development of theories contemporary with himself. And his attitude in regard to the *Romanzi* is a significant sign of the turn of the tide. Earlier, and in the neo-classics *quand même* later, the fact that a thing differs in kind from the accepted forms of poetry is proof that it is not poetry at all. Minturno cannot go this length. It is poetry inferior in kind, he still insists; but the excellence of those who have adopted it saves it, no matter to what extent. The concession is fatal. If Balbus builds a wall contrary to the laws of nature and architecture, it will not be an inferior wall; it will tumble down, and not be a wall at all. If he works a sum on the principle that two and two make five, his answer will be hopelessly wrong. But if the wall stands, if the sum comes right, the laws, the principles, cannot be wrong, though they may be different from others. The infallible and exclusive Kind-rules of the ancients are doomed to be swept away through the little gap in the dam that Minturno has opened.

The *Discorsi*[1] of Giraldi Cinthio—famous author of *Novelle*, and now much less famous, but perhaps not much less remarkable, producer of the chief Italian horror-tragedy, the *Orbecche*—supply a very interesting supplement-contrast to Minturno, whose earlier work they preceded by but a few years, and whom they provided with a theory of Romance to protest against. The exact date of the most interesting of them, and the question of property or plagiarism in their contents, have been the subject of one of those tedious "quarrels of authors" which are thickening upon us, but which we shall avoid as far as possible. Cinthio and a certain pupil of his, Giovanbattista Pigna, published in the same year (1554) books on the "Romances"—*i.e.*, poems like Ariosto's. Authorities decide in favour of the novelist, who asserts that his book was written in 1549, while each asserted that he had furnished the other with ideas; but it really does not matter. The point is, that on one of the two, and very probably on both, there had dawned the critical truth, which nobody had seen earlier, and on which Minturno himself would have pulled down "the blanket of the dark" once more if he could. Cinthio, it seems, first struck out the true line, and Pigna later developed it in still greater detail. Aristotle did not know Romance, and therefore his rules do not and cannot apply to it; while Italian literature generally is so different in circumstances from Greek that it must follow its own laws. Then Cinthio takes Ariosto and Boiardo, as Aristotle himself had taken the poets that were before him, and formulates laws from them. He does not ostracise the single-action and single-hero poem, the Aristotelian epic. But he adds the many-actioned and many-heroed poem like Ariosto's, and the chronicle-poem of successive actions by one party, of which there are examples from Statius downward (and of which, we may add, the *Odyssey* itself is really an example). For these two latter, which he rightly regards as both Romantic, he and

Giraldi Cinthio's Discorsi.

On Romance.

[1] *Scritti Estetici di Giambattista Giraldi Cinthio*, 2 vols., Milan, 1864. (In Daelli's *Biblioteca Rara*.) This edition gives extracts from Pigna's work, and documents respecting the quarrel.

Pigna (who is more specially *Ariostian*) gave rules accordingly, and Cinthio even illustrated his by a poem on Hercules. Both, but especially Pigna, despite their revolutionary tendencies in certain ways, cling to the ethical point of view, and maintain, perhaps a little hardily, that the modern romantic writers actually surpass the ancients in this respect.

On Drama.

In their main contention Cinthio and Pigna were no doubt right, and much in advance of their time. The reply of Minturno that Poetry may adapt itself to the times, but cannot depart from its own fundamental laws, is clearly a *petitio principii*. In his less important *Discorso* on the Drama Cinthio is hardly at all rebel to Aristotle—indeed it is very important to observe that even in the Romance Essay he has none of the partisan and somewhat illiberal anti-Peripateticism which we find later in Bruno and others. There he goes on the solid ground that Aristotle did not know the Kind for which he does not account—that he was no more blamable than, as we may say, supposing that he had given a definition of mammalia which excluded the kangaroo. In the Drama Cinthio had not been brought face to face with any similarly new facts. Italian tragedy, his own included, was scrupulously Senecan, if not quite scrupulously Aristotelian, in general lines. Italian comedy followed Plautus and Terence only too closely; and though Cinthio's lines of criticism (strengthened by the Ciceronian-Donatist theory of the *speculum vitæ*) led him, like Il Lasca and others, to insist on the different circumstances of Italian literature here also, they necessitated no new lawmaking as in the case of the *Romanzi*.

Some points in both.

Both *Discorsi* are full of ingenious *aperçus*, sometimes followed out—sometimes not. For instance, when Cinthio (i. 24) cites his three examples of writers who have treated their heroes from childhood upwards contrary to the Aristotelian principles, he instances Xenophon in the *Cyropædia* as well as Statius and Silius Italicus. The instance does not in his expressed remarks, but it might very well in his own or others' thoughts, lead to the consideration that whether verse is or is not essential to poetry, it is certainly *not* essential to Romance—with all the momentous and far-

reaching consequences of that discovery. Again he seems (i. 82) to have appreciated, with a taste and sense rare in his age, the impropriety of mixing up Christian and Pagan mythology. And the same taste and sense appear, as a rule, in the minuter remarks (p. 100 *sq.*) on verse and phrase, and even on those minutest points not merely of verbal but of literal criticism which the Italians, more sensible than some modern critics, never despised, though they may sometimes have gone to the other extreme. In fact, the last half, and rather more, of the *Discorso* is not so much concerned with the Romances as with poetic diction and arrangement in general, or even with these matters as concerns literature both in prose and in verse.

The dramatic *Discorso*, or rather *Discorsi* (for we may throw in a third piece on Satiric Composition), is much shorter than that on the Romances, being necessarily less controversial, and therefore, as has been said, less original. But Cinthio's independence of mind does not desert him even here. He is said to have been the first Italian who dared, in the *Orbecche* before mentioned, to disregard the Senecan practice[1] (so tedious in all modern imitations of it, and so crushingly exhibited in our own earliest tragic attempts) of beginning with an entire scene, or even act, of monologue. But, as often happens, his licences in some directions invite condonation by a tighter drawing of the reins elsewhere. He is credited (or debited) with the first reference in modern literature to the Unity of Time: and though it is well always to accept these assertions of priority with a certain suspension of judgment, it may be so. It is at any rate certain that he does out-Aristotle Aristotle in regard to this Unity, upon which, as is well known, the Stagirite lays very little stress. But he makes some amends by relaxing the proscription of the happy ending, so long as the proper purging effects of pity and terror are achieved. He also to some extent relaxes the extremest stringency of the old rule about trucida-

[1] To speak correctly, Seneca prefers (*Agamemnon*, *Hercules Furens*, *H. Œtœus*, *Medea*, *Troades*) to compose the First *Act* of a soliloquy and a chorus. This, when the chorus is not present, becomes of course a monologue. In the *Hippolytus*, *Octavia*, *Thebais*, and *Thyestes*, there *is* dialogue in the first Act. But, even of these, the first two begin with a lyrical monologue, which is in effect a first *Scene*.

tions *coram populo*. There *may* be death on the stage: but generally the *bienséances* of domestic life should be preserved there. On one point, in which Cinthio has had assigned to him the position of anti-Aristotelian origin, I venture to differ as to the interpretation of the *Poetics* themselves, not merely from Mr Spingarn but from Professor Butcher.[1] The later Neo-Classics, and especially the French, may have made rank too absolute a qualification of the tragic Hero. But I must say that I think they had their justification from Aristotle himself, and that Cinthio is at worst but dotting the *i*'s of the Stagirite as to σπουδαῖοι and χρηστοί. His extreme admiration of the choruses of Seneca (in justification whereof he cites Erasmus) is not wholly unwarranted. Few modern readers, unfortunately, know the stately beauty of these artful odes: though of course his preference (p. 81) of them to "all the Greeks" is wrong, and was probably occasioned by the very small attention which most Renaissance writers paid to Æschylus. The elaborate distinctions which he, like others, seeks to draw between Tragedy and Comedy from artificial points of view are to some extent justified by the very absence of such distinctions in Aristotle. They thought it their duty to supply what they did not find.

On Satire.

The Discourse, or rather Letter (for it bears both titles, and in scale and character rather deserves the latter name) on Satire is confessedly supplementary to the other *Discorsi*, and may be at least connected with the fact that the indefatigable author had himself attempted a satiric piece, *Egle*. He lays stress on the special connection of the Satire with the cult of Bacchus, takes into consideration the poetical as well as the scenic form, mentions the mixed or Varronian variety, and even extends his view to the Bucolic or Pastoral proper. But there are only some five-and-twenty pages, and the thing seems to have been really composed at "request of friends."

From a critic who did so much it would be somewhat unreasonable to demand more. In fact, though Cinthio did not go so far along the high historic path of truth as did Patrizzi thirty years later, he set on that path a firm foot. For the moment, and in Italy, the *romanzi* were the true battle-ground;

[1] *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, p. 232.

just as in England, for instance, that battle-ground was to be found a little later in the drama. At a period so early as this, and so close to the actual revolution of the Renaissance, it could hardly be expected that any one should reach the vantage-ground of a comprehensive survey of *all* literature, so as to deduce from it the positive and enfranchising, and not even from it the negative and disfranchising, laws of poetry. Not only had the vernaculars, with the exception of Italian itself, hardly furnished, at the time when Cinthio wrote, any modern literature fit to rank with the ancient—not only was it far too late, or far too early, to expect any one to give mediæval literature a fair chance with both—but men were still actually disputing whether the vernaculars had a right to exist. They were, like his namesake and clansman, to whom we come next, hinting surprise that any man of genius and culture should employ these vernaculars when he might write Latin, or, like one of his antagonists, Celio Calcagnini, aspiring to the disuse of vernacular for literary purposes altogether. In an atmosphere still so far from clear, with such heats and mists about, it is no small credit to Cinthio that, whether moved by mere parochial patriotism or by the secret feeling that *sua res* as a novelist was at question, or by anything else, he heard and caught at the dominant of the tune of criticism proper.

Pigna.

Pigna's *I Romanzi*,[1] whatever we may think of the quarrel between him and Cinthio, is a book not to be mentioned without considerable respect, or dismissed with mention so merely incidental as that given to it above. It is mainly, but not solely, a defence of Ariosto, and has not a few merits,—a just conception of the essentially Romantic nature of the *Odyssey*, a very careful and in the main sensible discussion of Prosody, and a widish comparison of instances. The main defect of it is the besetting sin of the whole three centuries with which this volume deals — the Obsession of the Kind. Instead of being satisfied with the demonstration (which he and Cinthio had reached) that Romance is not Epic, and is not bound by Epic laws, Pigna torments himself to show that Romance *is* Epic in this particular, not-Epic in that, and is

[1] Venice, 1554, 4to.

alternately subject to and free from bondage: while some of his detailed investigations may raise smile, or sigh, or shrug, according to mood or temperament. Thus for instance he inquires (after a fashion which we shall find echoed in Ronsard) into the character of the objects—Lance, Horn, Ring—with which *fatura* (fairy agency) is usually associated, till we feel inclined to say, "O learned and excellent signor, the poet may put *fatura* in a warming-pan—if he pleases, and can do it *poeticamente!*" But the book is, on the whole, a good book: and Pigna deserves to rank with Cinthio and Patrizzi as one of the Three who, alone in this first modern stage, saw, if but afar-off and by glimpses, the Promised Land from which the ship of criticism was to be once more driven by adverse winds for centuries to come.

Lilius Giraldus: his De Poetis Nostrorum Temporum.

A document of exceptional importance for us is provided by the two curious dialogues *De Poetis Nostrorum Temporum*[1] of Lilius Gregorius Giraldus, written about 1548-50, and dedicated partly to Renée of Ferrara, the French Princess who for a time protected Marot and others, partly to Cardinal Rangoni. Lilius, who was now in a good old age (he had been born in 1478), a Humanist of the better class, and a sincere Catholic possessed of sufficient independence of current ill-fashions to speak with severity of the verses of Beccadelli, would seem also to have been, at first- or second-hand, a man of very wide literary knowledge. His acquaintance with More[2] might be partly (as his very high estimate is certainly) conditioned by ecclesiastical partisanship; but he speaks of Wyatt long before *Tottel's Miscellany* made that poet's works publicly known, even in his own country, and, what is still more remarkable, of Chaucer.[3] Neither France nor Germany is excluded with the

[1] For the neat little edition of this by Karl Wotke (Berlin, 1894) one must be thankful, and also for the careful bibliographical introduction on recent work concerning Renaissance Literature.

[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 62, 63, 70. Giraldus also knows Colet, Grocyn, and others of the set.

[3] Fuere et in Britannorum idiomate et eorum vernaculo sermone aliqui poetæ ab iis summo in pretio habiti, inter quos Galfridus Chaucerus qui multa scripsit, et Thomas Viatus." That he adds "*ambo* insignes equites" is very pardonable.

usual Italian uppishness,[1] though Giraldus cannot help slipping the word *barbarus* more than once off his tongue. And though Italy herself has, as we should expect, the lion's share, yet the process of sharing is not pursued to that extreme of ridiculous arrogance which has been shown by the Greeks in their decadence, by the French in their Augustanism, and by the Italians themselves more than once.

Its width of range.

But this real knowledge on Giraldus' part, and the fairness of his spirit, only serve to accentuate the drift in the course and direction of this, the most important general summary of its kind that we meet between the *Labyrinthus* and the seventeenth century. Giraldus, though he does not absolutely exclude the vernaculars, is perfectly convinced that poetry, and indeed literature generally, means—first of all, and as far as its aristocracy goes exclusively—writing in Latin; nay, with him even translation from the classical languages is a more important thing than original composition in the vulgar tongue. His contempt of this latter is thinly though decently veiled in the passage on drama (*ed. cit.*, p. 40), where, speaking of the writers of comedy, and rightly preferring Ariosto to Bibbiena, he says, "sed enim vernaculo sermone id plerique opus aggressi pauci mea sententia assecuti sunt;" speaks (with a sort of visible shake of the head, as over a good man lost) of Ariosto himself as one who "Latino carmine aliquando ludit, sed nunc totum se vernaculis tradidit, atque inter cetera furentem Orlandum dare curat in publicum;"[2] patronisingly remarks of Trissino's projected *Sophonisba*, that if the whole of it is as good as the acts that the author recites, "erit, *licet vernacula ipsa*, Latinorum tamen non indigna lectione," wonders at this George who "est ipse et Græce et Latine bene doctus, at nunc fere in vernaculis conquiescit," and ends with an impatient "Verum de vernaculis jam satis," and a mutter about *tonsores sellulariique*. He speaks still less ambiguously later (ibid., p. 85), where cobblers and

But narrowness of view.

Horror at preference of vernacular to Latin.

[1] Not merely northern Humanists like Reuchlin, Erasmus, Eobanus Hessus, and Hutten, not merely Greeks from Gemistus Pletho to Musurus and Lascaris, but foreign vernacular writers like Ressendi, Juan de la Mena, Marot, Martial d'Auvergne receive notice.

[2] The supposed *date* of the conversation is, as usual in such case, thrown a good deal back.

other dregs of the people are added to barbers and mechanics in general (as a tail to a list headed by Boiardo, Pulci, Politian, and Lorenzo de' Medici!), and at last liberates his real feeling in a sentence, which many very excellent men in all European countries would have indorsed till nearly the end of the eighteenth century, "Ex quo nescioqui viri alioqui docti *in eam hæresim* incidere ut non modo vernaculas velint Latinis litteris æquare verum etiam anteponere, quin et id etiam litteris prodidere." "Whence some persons, in other respects learned, have fallen into such a heresy that they not only choose to make the vernaculars equal with Latin, but even to set them above it—nay, they have actually given literary expression to the doctrine." A terrible thing to Humanists, and, alas! one to which they have since had to make up their minds! Unfortunately, the two great classical languages now pay, and for some time to come are likely to continue paying, the penalty of this idle miscalculation and *outrecuidance* on the part of their mistaken partisans; and it is the first duty of all lovers of letters *now* to fight for their maintenance in due place.

But still the almost invincible equity of the man displays itself even in his judgment of these unhappy schismatics; and he seems to make some difference between the vernacular dialects and the *Sermo Etruscus*. On Berni, Alamanni, the two "gentlewomen-poetesses," as the Italians call them, Vittoria Colonna and Veronica Gambara, Speroni, La Casa, Aonio Paleario, Molza, he has things amiable and acute at once to say.

Yet a real critic in both kinds.

But his heart is not here, nor in the mention of the poor barbarous foreigners who may perhaps have some better excuse than "Latins" for not writing in the Latin tongue. It is of those who do so write—Italians first of all, but also others—that he really thinks as "the poets of his time." He can find room for a mere grammarian (though a very excellent grammarian) like William Lilly: he speaks of him *magnificentissime*, and if this notice contrasts rather comically with the brief and cold reference to Erasmus, it is fair to remember not merely that Erasmus was by no means *persona grata* to the Roman orthodox, but that his

poetical work is really nothing as compared with his exquisite prose.

He begins with the two Mirandolas, Pontanus, Marullus, and Sannazar, and is copious though not uncritical on them all: *non numquam nimis lascivire et vagari videtur*, he says of Pontanus. Recalled by his interlocutor to still earlier writers, he has the judgment of "the Panormitan"[1] (Beccadelli), which has been noticed, and a by no means unremarkable one, dwelling ominously on the "facility" of Mapheus Vegius, the egregious person who took upon himself to write a thirteenth *Æneid*. Many forgotten worthies (among whom Filelfo and the better Aretines, Charles and Leonard, are the least forgotten) lead us (for Bembo and Sadolet have had their position earlier, and will have it again) to a famous pair, Mantuan and Politian. Giraldus is decisive and refreshing on Mantuan. This loudly over-praised poet is *extemporalis magis quam poeta maturus*, and as to his being *alter Maro*, why "Bone Deus! quam dispar ingenium!"[2] He is much more favourable to the author of the *Nutricia* and the *Manto*, but does not forget his swashing blow even here. Politian seems to him to have written *calore potius quam arte*, and to have used little diligence either in choosing his subjects or correcting his work. The Strozzi and Urceus Codrus follow, with many minor lights, from the notices of whom the judgment on Ludovicus Bigus Pictorius of Ferrara stands out as applicable, unfortunately, to some greater men and many as small or smaller. "Cum pius deflexit ad religionem, ut vita melior ita carmine deterior visus est." Then one of the regulation pieces of flattery as to the Augustan character of the rule of *Leo Maximus* conducts us to notices of Naugerius and Vida, where the moderate and deserved praise of the first would contrast oddly (if we did not know how the pseudo-classical tradition for two hundred years and more said vehement "ditto" to Giraldus) with the extravagant eulogies on the polished emptiness of the latter. And then a great *turba*

Short précis of the dialogues.

[1] He allows him (p. 18, ed. cit.) "sweetness and wit," but says *nescio quare* as to the contemporary praise of the *Hermaphroditus*, and adds plumply, *nec poeta bonus nec bonus orator*. The simple fact is that, if the subjects of this notorious book were decent, nobody would see anything but quite ordinary merit in their treatment.

[2] Ed. cit., p. 25.

comes, among which the two Beroalds, Acciauoli and, among blind poets, Bello, the author of the *Mambriano*, chiefly take the eye.

We have noted the condescension to such prose vernacular creatures as Ariosto, Bibbiena, and (with a long interval certainly) Trissino and the author of the first *Rosmunda*. It is succeeded by another review of persons long relinquished to dusty shelves and memories, with a few better known names like Molza and Longolius. The praise of the great Fracastorius is much more moderate than we might have expected—probably Giraldus did not like his subject—and then there is a curious passage on "fancy" verses, leonine, serpentine, and others, leading to yet another, in which the worse side of the Renaissance—its contempt for the Middle Ages—is shown by a scornful reference to *Architrenios et Anti-claudianos*, which finishes the first dialogue. The second is of a wider cast, but needs less minute account here, though it is at least as well worth reading. It begins with the Greeks, who did so much for Italy, from Gemistus Pletho and Chrysoloras downwards, then takes the Spaniards and Portuguese, then our own countrymen, then the Germans and French. Here comes the description of Erasmus as *inter Germanos Latinus inter Latinos aliquando Germanus;* and here Giraldus frankly confesses that he is not going to say anything about persons like Œcolampadius, Bucer, Sturm, and Melanchthon, since they were not contented to confine themselves to good literature, and would know too much, and trouble Israel with Luther. But a good word is spared, justly, for the author of the *Basia*, with a reversion to still younger men, among whom Palingenius, Julius Cæsar Scaliger, and Castelvetro are the best known, and with the final fling at the vernaculars above given.

Such a book, with its wonderful width of range[1] and its

[1] As a rough but not misleading gauge of this it may be mentioned that Herr Wotke's *Namenregister* contains, for less than 100 printed pages, between four and five hundred entries, including, besides those noticed in the text, names like those of Olympia Morata and Bilibald Pirkheimer, Castiglione and Alciati, Conrad Celtes and Paulus Jovius, Cardinal Perotti and Jacob Wimpheling. In fact, hardly any one in Europe who had to do with *belles lettres* seems to have been outside the cognisance, in closer or vaguer kind, of Giraldus.

sometimes equally wonderful contraction of view, is worth, to the historian of real criticism, a dozen long-winded tractates hunting the old red-herrings of critical theory. The *De Poetis Nostrorum Temporum* gives us one of those veritable and inestimable rallying-points of which our History should be little more than a reasoned catalogue, connected by summary of less important phenomena. Referring duly to it, we find ourselves at the standpoint of a man who has really wide knowledge, and who, when his general assumptions do not interfere, has a real critical grasp. But the chief of these assumptions is not merely that the vernaculars have not attained equality with the classics—this, allowing for inevitable defects of perspective and other things, would not be fatal—but that they cannot attain such equality, much less any superiority. The point of view—to us plain common-sense—that if Sannazar and others wrote in Latin about Christian subjects, they should use Christian Latin, seems to Giraldus the point of view of a kind of maniac. Without the details and developments of Vida, he is apparently in exact accordance with that excellent Bishop. Cicero and Virgil, not to mention others, have achieved for literature a medium which cannot be improved upon, and all those who adopt any other are, if not exactly wicked, hopelessly deceived and deluded. This is the major premiss for practically every syllogism of our critic. Where it does not come in—between vernacular and vernacular, between Latin and Latin of the classical type—he can judge just judgment. Where it comes in, the more perfect his logic, the more inevitably vitiated is his conclusion.

Their great historic value.

CHAPTER III.

SCALIGER, CASTELVETRO, AND THE LATER ITALIAN CRITICS OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

JULIUS CÆSAR SCALIGER—THE 'POETIC'—BOOK I.: 'HISTORICUS'—BOOK II.: 'HYLE'—BOOKS III. AND IV.: 'IDEA' AND 'PARASCEVE'—BOOKS V. AND VI.: 'CRITICUS' AND 'HYPERCRITICUS'—BOOK VII.: EPINOMIS—GENERAL IDEAS ON UNITY AND THE LIKE—HIS VIRGIL-WORSHIP—HIS SOLID MERITS—CASTELVETRO—THE OPERE VARIE—THE 'POETICA'—ON DRAMATIC CONDITIONS—ON THE THREE UNITIES—ON THE FREEDOM OF EPIC—HIS ECCENTRIC ACUTENESS—EXAMPLES: HOMER'S NODDING, PROSE IN TRAGEDY, VIRGIL, MINOR POETRY—THE MEDIUM AND END OF POETRY—UNCOMPROMISING CHAMPIONSHIP OF DELIGHT—HIS EXCEPTIONAL INTEREST AND IMPORTANCE—TASSO AND THE CONTROVERSIES OVER THE 'GERUSALEMME'—TASSO'S CRITICAL WRITINGS AND POSITION—PATRIZZI: HIS 'POETICA'—THE 'DECA ISTORIALE'—THE 'DECA DISPUTATA'—THE 'TRIMERONE' ON TASSO—REMARKABLE POSITION OF PATRIZZI—'SED CONTRA MUNDUM'—THE LATEST GROUP OF SIXTEENTH-CENTURY CRITICS—PARTENIO—VIPERANO—PICCOLOMINI—GILIO—MAZZONI—DENORES—ZINANO—MAZZONE DA MIGLIONICO, ETC.—SUMMO.

Julius Cæsar Scaliger.

IN the remarkable little book, a notice of which concluded the last chapter, Lilius Giraldus, as we observed, includes—for their verse-work nominally, as became his title, but, with his usual acuteness, obviously perceiving that their importance lay elsewhere—both of the most famous and influential critics of the central sixteenth century in Italy. His reference to Julius Cæsar Scaliger (who was, indeed, not more than six years younger than himself) contains some touches (such as the mention of him by the name he took, but with the addition "qui primus Bordonus cognomine fuit," and the

description of his book on Comic Metres, as "arranged with such wonderful subtlety as not to be intelligible save to a reader well versed in the subject") which are of doubtful friendliness, but allows the Veronese gladiator to be *apprime eruditus* and capable of *carmina elegantia*. For us nothing of Scaliger's needs detailed notice except the once world-famous and still famous *Poetices Libri Septem*,[1] which appeared in 1561 after the death of Giraldus, and indeed after his own.

Scaliger was very much better qualified than Boileau to be *législateur du Parnasse* in the sense in which both understood Parnassus: or perhaps it would be better to say that without a Scaliger a Boileau would have been impossible. He had immense learning; he had absolute confidence in his own judgment; and within limits which, if they reduce his positive value, make him an even more complete and direct exponent of his own particular school and creed, he had great acuteness, an orderly and logical spirit, and a thorough command of method. Nothing (certain inevitable postulates being granted) can be more luminous and intelligible than the book, in which the author, through all his thousand pages, never loses sight, nor permits his reader to lose sight, of the subject, the process, and the goal. That he stands forth in the preface to his son Sylvius with an air of patronage at once paternal and pedagogic, announcing himself as the pioneer of the subject, dismissing those who allege Varro, as with levity ignoring the fact that neither Varro nor anybody else in antiquity did, or could do, anything of the kind: that he blandly sweeps away the *plebs grammaticorum;* that he labels the *Ars Poetica* itself as teaching *adeo sine ulla arte ut saturæ propius esse videatur*, Aristotle as fragmentary, Vida as *optimus poeta in theatro, claudus magister in schola*—is all of it agreeably Scaligerian in manner. But it is far from being untrue in fact. And there is a touch of sublimity in the *Quare porro opera danda est nobis*, "wherefore *we* must put our shoulders to the wheel," with which he concludes. "Let others grub money, or canvass for office, or talk about the wars as parasite guests at dinner: we will let them alone, and simply defend the nobility of our

The Poetic.

[1] My copy is the second edition (apud Petrum Santandreanum, *s. l.*, 1581).

studies, the magnanimity and simplicity of our purpose." After this magnificent pose and draping, and before commendatory verses (the main copy being by no less a person than Etienne de La Boétie) comes a table of contents of antique clearness and solidity, filling nearly a dozen pages, by means of which, and of the more than sixty of index at the end, the study of the text is not a little facilitated.

Book I.: Historicus.

The First Book has the special title, *Qui et Historicus*, which it deserves, if not exactly or exclusively in our sense of History. The critic begins, scholastically enough, with a distribution of everything into necessary, useful, or delightful, and proceeds to apply the classification in a beneficial manner to literary expression in general and Poetry in particular, ending the chapter with a characteristic gibe (for Scaliger is far from unhumorous) at the moderns who confine the appellation "Makers" to candle-makers.[1] Then he follows the safe road by discussing the causes (material, formal, &c.) of poetry; and indulges in a free review (for Scaliger, to do him justice, is *paratus nullius jurare in verba*) of ancient opinions. Hence he sets off to a full enumeration and examination, not merely of the kinds of poetry, but (in connection more especially with the drama) of the theatres and games of the ancients. Nothing escapes the extensive view of his observation, neither palinodes nor parodies, neither centos nor enigmas. And he is intensive as well as extensive. He rebukes, in his usual magisterial manner, the *Græculas nugas* of Plutarch, who explains the number of the Muses by that of the letters in the name of their mother, Mnemosyne; and as for Plato's blame of poetry, *respiccat ipse sese quot ineptas quot spurcas fabellas inserat.*[2] The distinction of *Poesis*, *Poema*, and *Poeta*, which follows (and which many grave writers, including Ben, copy), we have often met in kind or in itself before, nor is it quite so meticulous as it looks.

[1] This joke requires a little explanation and adaptation to get it into English. The Latin is *miror majores nostros sibi tam iniquos fuisse ut factoris vocem maluerint* olearíorum cancellis *circumscribere*. In fact, *Fattojo* and *Fattojano*, if not *fattore*, do mean in Italian "Oil-Press" and "Oil-Presser."

[2] Scaliger goes so far as to say that "it would be better never to have read" the *Symposium* and the *Phædrus*, because of their taint with the *Græcanicum scelus*.

For Scaliger utilises it to stop the blunder of Plutarch and others, who make a distinction in kind between great poems and smaller ones. It is tempting but impossible to follow him through the multitudinous, though far from mazy, ramifications of his plan. It must be enough to say that he leaves few items of the dictionary of his subject untouched, and (however inclined one may be to cry "Halt and fight!" at not a few of his definitions) formulates them with a roundness and a touch of confident mastery which fully explain, and to some extent justify, the practical dictatorship which he so long enjoyed. As thus (at the opening of chap. vi. p. 27), "Tragedy, like Comedy established in examples of human life, differs from it in three things—the condition of the persons, the quality of the fortunes and actions, the end. Whence it is necessary that it should also differ in style." And this legislative calmness is accompanied and fortified by a profusion of erudite example, which might well awe the disciple.

Book II.: Hyle.

The second book, *Qui et Hyle*, gives us an important point at once, in the fact that this *hyle*—this "material" of poetry—is frankly acknowledged to be verse.[1] The entire book is occupied, at the rate of a chapter apiece, after the half-dozen general ones which open it, with almost every classical metre, if not from pyrrhic to dochmiac, at least from iambic to galliambic. A great number of interesting dicta might be extracted from this book—as, for instance, Scaliger's remarkable distinction of Rhythm and Metre, as giving, the latter the more exact *measure* of the line, the former its continuity and "temperament."[2]

[1] The decision of this is all the more remarkable that Scaliger does not, as unwary moderns might expect, make verse the *form* of Poetry, but the *matter*. Feet, rhythm, metre, these are the things that Poetry works in, her stuff, her raw material. The skill of the poet in its various applications is the form. A very little thought will show this to be the most decisive negation possible of the Wordsworthian heresy—anticipated by many sixteenth-century writers, from Italy to England, and though not exactly authorised, countenanced by the ancients, from Aristotle downwards—that verse is *not* essential in any way.

[2] One cannot help thinking that this distinction, which is quite contrary to those entertained by Aristotle and Quintilian, must have been influenced by the cadences of the modern languages—Italian and French—with which Scaliger was familiar. In both, but

The third, *Qui et Idea*, is far longer than either of the preceding, and is less easily describable to modern readers. Those who have read the first volume of this book with some care will understand it without much difficulty, if we call it a throwing of the traditional and technical treatment of Rhetoric into a form suitable to Poetry. Prosopopœia and ethopœia; the bearings or "colours" of time, place, race, sex, and the rest; the considerations of chance and manners and fortune; lead us to our old friends the Figures. To these, giving them the most liberal interpretation possible, so as to include fresh kinds of poetry as well as actual turns of speech, Scaliger complacently allows nearly a hundred out of the nearly hundred and thirty chapters of this overgrown Book, comprising by itself nearly a full quarter of the volume. Nor does even this devotion to Figures satisfy him, for the Fourth Book, *Qui et Parasceve* (preparation), beginning with the characters or distinctions of style, turns before long to more Figures, and is, in fact, a sort of Part II. of the Third. Naturally, there is no part of the book more difficult to analyse, but, as naturally, there is none in which analysis is less required. Scaliger luxuriates in his opportunities of sub-division and sub-definition; but he abounds ever more and more in those examples which we have recognised as, from the time of Hermogenes downwards, the "solace of this sin," and the plentifulness of which in Scaliger himself would, even if they stood alone, go some way to atone for the absence of a larger examination of writers as wholes. And he does not allow us to lack even this.

Books III. and IV.: Idea and Parasceve.

Another pair of Books, the Fifth (*Qui et Criticus*) and the Sixth (*Qui et Hypercriticus*), together constitute the pith and body of the book in spirit, and occupy more than a third of it in space. It is here that Scaliger lets himself and his learning loose. The Fifth Book consists of a vast series of cross-comparisons, Homer with Virgil,

Books V. and VI.: Criticus and Hypercriticus.

especially in French, the actual "measuring-off" of syllables was the be-all and end-all of metre, the easements provided in English and German by syllabic equivalence being in French refused altogether, in Italian replaced only by the more meagre aid of syncope and apocope.

Greeks with Latins, Virgil with Greeks other than Homer, Horace and Ovid with Greeks, Latins with other Latins, special subject-passages of the same theme from different authors. Its sequel, the *Hypercriticus*, undertakes, for the first time, an actual survey of *belles lettres* as Scaliger understood them, beginning, after an odd discussion of Plautus and Terence, with the Renaissance Humanists (many Italians and a few Germans and French), and then receding through three Ages (the Middle disdainfully excluded), to Catullus and Horace. Here, of course, one may, according to taste or temperament, most revel in, or most shudder away from, "criticism of criticism." Here the citation is most opulent and useful. Here, above all, the most hostile judge must be forced to admire and acknowledge the erudition which not merely for the first time attempts, but for the first time completely meets the initial requirements of, a complete examination of poetic literature on a definite and reasoned basis. But here, inevitably, the weakness of Scaliger comes out most strongly, as well as his strength. Not only was his judgment warped in more ways than one by prejudice, but we are, with all the goodwill in the world, forced before long to conclude[1] that his taste itself was radically defective. Nor does this conclusion rest merely on his preference (anticipated by Vida and others, and almost an article of national faith) of Virgil to Homer. His estimate of Musæus also as far superior to Homer, as incomparable among Greeks, as "worthy of Virgil," speaks this taste only too well; and the fearless good faith with which, disdaining the "guile that lurks in generals," he quotes line after line as specially beautiful, delivers him into our hands, a respectable but self-convicted victim. After this the "coldness" and "childishness" and "unsuitability" of the Homeric epithet, the "semper-august" character of Virgil, and innumerable other things of the kind, disturb us not. Scaliger's idol has spoken Scaliger's doom in *Qui Bavium non odit*—not, of course, that *Hero and Leander* is itself by any means Bavian, but that it is so in comparison with Homer. Nearly a hundred pages are given up to this main comparison of Homer and Virgil. The

[1] As, even throughout the neo-classic age, very orthodox neo-classics admitted, especially in the "Musæus *v.* Homer" case.

others are shorter, but always result in the same dogged maintenance of the superiority of Latins to Greeks—that is to say, the same involuntary confession of Scaliger's preference of Rhetoric to Poetry. It is interesting, however, to find him conducting his comparisons in a way in which, as in most other cases, posterity for two centuries thronged to follow him—the assemblage, that is to say, of passages on the same subject from different poets.

Still less can we abstract the curious and invaluable survey of the *Hypercriticus*. Not a little of it is actual review of actual contemporaries or very recent predecessors, and review of the ancients takes the same form, reinforced constantly by discussed quotations. Sometimes, as in the case of Juvenal, these are arranged into a little anthology of "jewels five words long," strung together with *acute et hoc, illud valde festivum*, and the like appreciative interjections. His preference of Juvenal to Horace is seasoned with a characteristic fling at Erasmus (p. 876).

Lastly comes an *Epinomis* or Codicil, which is divided into two parts, and takes up some of the special points of poetical *Book VII.:* Epinomis. or dramatic criticism then most interesting — the relative importance of action and character, the parts of tragedy, the Chorus, the metres most appropriate to the stage, and the like, ending with a sort of "gratillity" or bonus in the shape of an examination of a codex of Terence, which we could spare, at least in this place. More piquant, at least, are the diatribes *de negligentia aut inscitia professorum*, directed (with a show of respect) against Erasmus once more; the occasional flights, such as "Variety is the *tirewoman* of poetry"[1] (p. 906); the amusing references to *mea poemata*, which in some parts of the book he has obligingly, and once more with a fearlessness drawing nigh to rashness, exposed to the arrows; and other things which are perhaps here all the more numerous because the Book is an avowed Appendix, and, as it were, *omnium gatherum*. They are, however, plentiful everywhere; and if it were possible to revive the old periodical Literary Miscellanies of commonplace-book character—a thing which

[1] *Varietas poetices κομητικὴ, sicut Cypassis Corinnæ.* The text has κομωτικὴ, which I do not find.

will have to be done sooner or later, if the accumulations of the last few centuries are not to became mere Nineveh-mounds, as yet unexplored—I should like to compose a *florilegium* of memorabilia out of Scaliger.

General ideas on Unity and the like.

For in this great space, occupied with equal method and erudition, it could not be but that remarkable pronouncements on the more general questions of literary criticism, whether given *obiter* or in definite reference to argued questions, should emerge. Scaliger is, indeed, less set than most of his predecessors in Italian criticism, and than some at least of his successors, on these general pronouncements. "The disinterested and philosophic treatment of æsthetic problems wholly aside from all practical considerations," as the tendency of Italian criticism has been rather unguardedly characterised,[1] does not seem to have had the first attraction for him. Yet he could not, in the wide sweep of his net, have avoided such questions if he would; and, with his fearless temper and eager literary interests, there is no reason to suppose that he would have avoided them if he could. He did not explicitly enjoin the Three Unities,[2] but he did more than any other man had done to inculcate that unfortunate notion of "verisimilitude"[3] from which, much more than from Aristotle, they were deduced. Not many words need be wasted (especially as the point will recur only too often during the volume) on the absurdity of this wresting of *Incredulus odi.* The whole arrangements of the theatre are *invraisemblables,* no matter whether you have electric light or cross-shaped laths with candles on them, marquises sitting on the stage or millionaires in stage-boxes, elaborate scenery or directions to the audience, "Here is Thebes." You do not murder, or (if you can help it) make love, in real life, before a miscellaneous

[1] Spingarn, p. 172. "Disinterested treatment" of practical problems, such as poems certainly are, "wholly aside from all practical considerations," sometimes leads to awkward results.

[2] Mr Spingarn (p. 94) apparently states that he "formulated" them, but the gist of the next two pages fully corrects this slip or ambiguity; and he has himself pointed out with equal decision and correctness that the French assumption contained in the phrase, *Unités Scaligériennes,* is unfounded.

[3] P. 365.

audience who have paid to see you do it; in real life you do not talk in any regular stage lingo that has hitherto been invented, whether the outward form of it be senarii, or fourteeners, or complicated rhymed stanzas, or doggerel, or couplet, or blank verse, or stage prose. The sixteenth century *Globe*, and the twentieth century *Lyceum*, are alike unlike any place in which one habitually performs any action of life from birth, through marriage, to death. That there *is* a stage verisimilitude, which it is dangerous or fatal to break, need not be denied. But neither Scaliger nor any of his successors in purism has proved that we are, or ought to be, any more shocked by Æschylus when he shifts from Delphi to Athens than by Thackeray when he transports us from Flanders to Chelsea.

We may venture indeed to suspect that Scaliger "had more wit than to be here." One may frequently differ with him; but he seldom runs mad on mere theory. It is he, for instance, who, while, as we have seen, he lays down uncompromisingly that the material of poetry is verse, instances the *Æthiopica* as a perfect epic. Instead of confusing poetry and learning, as some have done, he holds the much more sensible position that learning is useful to a poet. He takes the hard-and-fast ethical view of the ends both of tragedy and of all poetry, and he believes firmly in the type. But he does not bemuse himself, as some had done and more were to do, in the explanation of *katharsis*, and the definition of the tragic hero.

His Virgil-worship.

His greatest and also his most pervading critical fault is that "deification of Virgil," whereof, though by no means the inventor, he was the chief prophet to the best part of three centuries. Let it be admitted (with every possible emphasis on the fact that it is no mere extorted admission but a genuine and spontaneous opinion) that anybody is free to admire Virgil or any one else as much as he likes. "She that is fair to him" *is* so, and there's an end on't. But if any one proceed, not merely to intimate indifference to other fair ones, but to find positive fault with them because they are not like her, then he becomes at once uncritical: still more so if he erect her qualities, features, style, into abstract virtues

and positive truths, all opposites to which are sin and vileness. He may call "Simula Silene, nervosa et lignea Dorcas," to take two only out of the famous list in the classic place of this matter. But he must not declare that a girl who has a straight Grecian nose is therefore ugly, or that softness and plumpness are not excellent things in woman. Scaliger does this. For him Virgil is, at once, the standard of excellence and the infallible touchstone of defect. Nay, he is actually a better Nature; a wiser but more perfect Creation, whereby you may save yourself the trouble of outside imitation, inasmuch as everything worth imitating is there better done than by Nature herself. It is impossible to exaggerate or caricature Scaliger's Maronolatry: as the Highfliers did in the case of Defoe's *Shortest Way*, he would cheerfully accept and indorse the most outrageous statement of it.

Grave, however, as is this fault, and seriously as it vitiates Scaliger's attitude as a critic, there is no doubt that it served in itself as the backbone of that attitude, and gave it the stiffness which enabled it to resist at once argument and time. A cause of disquiet to some critics themselves, and a rallying-cry to most enemies of criticism, has been constantly found in the apparently floating and uncertain character of the completest critical orthodoxy. Longinus himself, perhaps the best exponent of that orthodoxy, has been and is charged with vagueness; and all those who follow him must lay their account with the same accusation. In the last resort we often cannot give a clear, definite, cut-and-dried reason for the faith that is in us, and we still oftener had better not try to do so. Scaliger and Scaligerism are in no such plight. Their *Sortes Virgilianæ* are *ex hypothesi* decisive, and of universal application. What is found in Virgil is good, is the best; what is different from Virgil is bad or mediocre; what is like Virgil is good in direct proportion to the likeness. This of itself gives confidence both to the critic and to his disciples.

His solid merits.

Again, Scaliger, though he has no more right to arrogate Reason and Nature as on his side than the rest of his school, possesses, like all of the best of them, a certain sturdy *prima facie* common-sense. It is this which

dictates his theory of dramatic verisimilitude; this which palliates some of his Homeric and other blasphemies. Though uncompromisingly moral, and by no means illogical (when you have once granted his bundle of postulates), he is not in the least metaphysical. The wayfaring man, with tolerable intelligence and a very little trouble, can understand him perfectly.

Still more unmixed praise can be given to him from other points of view. To any scholar his scholarship is singularly refreshing in its thoroughness and range; he really neglects nothing proper to his subject, though he may define that subject with a somewhat arbitrary hand. Agree with him or differ with him as we may, it is an infinite comfort to be brought thus in contact and confrontation with the actual texts—to exchange the paper symbols of "the poet," "the dramatist," "the satirist" in the abstract, for sound ringing coin of actual poetry, drama, satire, told down on the counter, and tested by file and acid if required. The literary atlas of the *Hypercriticus* is, as has been said, the first attempt at a complete thing of the kind since Quintilian, and of necessity far more complete than his. In fact, Scaliger taught the school opposed to him—the school which after many a generation of desultory fighting at last worsted his own—the way to conquer. History and Comparison—the twin lights of criticism, the only road-makers across the abyss—are resorted to by him fearlessly. That he loses the best of their light, and twists the road in the wrong direction, by following Will-o'-the-wisps like his Virgil-worship, matters in detail but not in principle. He has practically come back to the safe way which Aristotle entered, but was precluded from treading far enough, which Quintilian and Longinus trod, but on which most of the ancients would not set foot. He has not found the last secret—the secret of *submitting* to History and to Comparison; he still looks upon both as instruments to be used merely under the direction of, and in subordination to, the purposes of *a priori* theory. His neglect of the vernaculars is not only wrong, but by his time absurd. His minor prejudices (as against Erasmus) are sometimes contemptible. His actual taste, as has been said, was

probably neither delicate nor versatile. But he has learning, logic, lucidity within his range, laborious industry, and love of literature. The multitude which followed him followed him partly to do evil; but it would have been a surprise, and almost a shame, had so bold and capable a leader lacked a multitude of followers.

Castelvetro.

As has been said, Lilius Giraldus also refers to Lodovico Castelvetro, who at least resembled Scaliger in the characteristic Ishmaelitism of the Renaissance critic. His quarrel with Caro, also already referred to, was unluckily, we must not say distinguished, but marked, by unfair play on the part of his adversary, who "delated" him to the Inquisition for heresy; and Castelvetro had to fly the country. His most important work appeared late, the famous edition and translation, with commentary, of the *Poetics*[1] not being published till a year before his death. "He was of his nature choleric," says his biographer; and he bestowed a good deal of this choler not merely upon Caro, but upon the majestic Bembo and others. Yet Castelvetro was a very remarkable critic, and perhaps deserved the ascription of actual critical genius better than any man who has yet been mentioned in this volume. It is but for chequered righteousness that his practically certain formulation of the Three Unities can be counted to him; but, as we shall see, he has other claims, from which it is not necessary to write off anything.

His impartial attachment to both classical and vulgar tongues ranks him, of itself, in a higher sphere than that of Scaliger; and a certain impetuous, incalculable, *prime-sautier* genius puts

[1] Vienna, 1570. My copy is the second enlarged and improved issue, which appeared at Basle five years later. I have also the companion edition of Petrarch (Basle, 1582), and the *Opere Varie Critiche*, published, with a Life, by Muratori, in 4to (Lione, 1727). Besides these he wrote an "exposition" of Dante, which was lost, and he is said, by Muratori, to have been never tired of reading, and discovering new beauties in, Boccaccio. Bentley, *Diss. on Phal.*, ed. 1817, p. liii, defending Castelvetro against Boyle, says that "his books have at this present time such a mighty reputation, that they are sold for their weight in silver in most countries of Europe." I am glad that this is not true now, for the *Poetic* by itself weighs nearly 3 lb. But Europe often makes its valuations worse. I have seen, though not bought, a copy for a shilling in these days.

him higher still. Even contemporaries seem to have recognised this in him, though they sometimes shook their heads over its pronouncements.[1] It may, indeed, sometimes seem that these pronouncements are, if not inconsistent, difficult to connect by any central tie-beam of critical theory. But this is almost inevitable in the case of a critic whose work takes the form, not of regular treatises on large subjects, nor even of connected essays on separate authors and books, but of commentaries and *adversaria*, where the passage immediately under consideration is uppermost in the writer's mind, and may—not illegitimately in a fashion—induce him to display a facet of his thought which does not seem logically connected with other facets. This peculiarity is perhaps the only excuse for the depreciation of Dacier, who, reinforcing his native dulness with the superciliousness of a Frenchman in the later years of Louis XIV., accused Castelvetro of ignorance, and even of contradiction of Aristotle. The fact is, that Castelvetro is first of all an independent critic, and that, though there are few less common, there are no more valuable critical qualities than independence, even when it is sometimes pushed to the verge of eccentricity, providing only that it is sincere, and not ill-informed. It seems to me uncharitable, if not flagrantly unjust, to deny Castelvetro sincerity, and either impudent or ignorant to deny him information.

But he had also acuteness and taste. I do not know a better example in little of the latter quality at the time than his short and scornful description[2] of a preposterous comparison by another critic, Bartolommeo Riccio, between the "Sparrow" of Catullus and a pretty but commonplace poem of Navagero on a dog. One may sigh over the ruling passion, not to say the original sin, of critical man, on passing from this to a tangle of recrimination and "that's *my* thunder" which follows with reference to Riccio and Pigna and Cinthio. But this passes again into a solid discussion on

The Opere Varie.

[1] See the curious remarks of Salviati, printed from MS. by Mr Spingarn (*op. cit.*, p. 316). Salviati thinks that Castelvetro too often wrote to show off subtlety of opinion, and to be *not* like other people.

[2] *Op. Vàr.*, p. 83 *sq.*

the material and form of poetry, and on the office of the Muses. Many of these animadversions are, as we should expect, purely verbal, sometimes not beyond the powers of the *grammaticuccio*, of whom Castelvetro himself not unfrequently talks with piquant scorn. But the comfort of finding annotations on Virgil alternating with discourses on Dante, like that of placing a quarto on Petrarch side by side with one on Aristotle, more than atones for any occasional hair-splitting. We are at last in the Jerusalem of general Literature which is the mother of us all, which is free and universal; not in this or that separatist Samaria or exclusive Hebron. The Platonic annotations, which are numerous, are important, because they show just the other side of Castelvetro's talent from the merely verbal one—almost the whole of them being devoted to the exposition and illustration of meaning. It is a great pity that he did not work his notes[1] on the *Gorgias* (which he regards expressly as Plato's *Rhetoric*) into a regular treatise of contrast and comparison on this subject between Aristotle and Plato. But all these notes show us the qualification of the commentator to deal with so difficult a subject as the *Poetics*.

The Poetica.

The stout post quarto, with its vignette of an exceedingly determined-looking owl standing on a prostrate pitcher and hooting *Kekrika*, is dedicated to Maximilian II. It is arranged on a system equally simple and thorough. First comes a section of the Greek Text; then a short Italian summary of its contents; then the Italian translation; and then the *spositione*—the Commentary—which may be long or short as circumstances require. Often, on a Greek text of a few lines, it will run to as many quarto pages, full-packed with small print. Not the least advantageous part of this quadripartite arrangement is that the summaries—being, though very brief, to the point—are capable of being put together as a table of contents. This, however, but partially applies to Castelvetro's commentary, which is often not a little discursive from the text. The defect was, however, supplied in the second edition by an elaborate index specially devoted to the *Spositioni*, and consisting, not of mere words or names

[1] *Op. Var.*, pp. 288-306.

with page references, but of reasoned descriptions of the subjects, as thus—

"*Allegrezza.*

"Come nasca dalla tristitia, che si sente del male del giusto, e del bene del malvagio.
oblica, che si prende dalla miseria, o dalla felicita altrui qual sia," &c. &c.

This is a great help in tackling Castelvetro's text, the book containing some seven hundred pages, of perhaps as many words each.

On Dramatic conditions.

No analysis of a book of such a size, so necessarily parasitic or satellitic on another in general run, and yet branching and winding with such a self-willed originality of its own, is possible. One might easily write a folio on Castelvetro's quarto. Here we can only, as in most other cases now, except those of books or parts of books at once epoch-making in character and moderate in bulk, give an idea of the author's most important views on general and particular points. It was necessary, since Castelvetro is revolving round Aristotle, that the greater part of his treatise should deal with the drama: and perhaps nowhere is that originality which has been praised more visible than here, whether it lead him wrong or right. He has undoubtedly made a step, from the mathematical towards the æsthetic view of literature, in conditioning, as he does, his view of the Drama by a consideration of the stage. To literary *a-priorists* this is of course horrible; to those who take the facts of literature, as they take the facts of life, it is a welcome and reconciling discovery. The conditions of the Greek stage were admittedly such as can never be naturally reproduced, and therefore, however great and perfect the Greek Tragedy may be in its own way, it cannot usurp the position of "best in all ways"; and can still less pretend to dictate to other kinds that they shall not be good at all in ways different from its own.

On the Three Unities.

If the details of Castelvetro's theory do not always correspond in excellence to the sense and novelty of the general view, this is because he adulterates his notion of stage requirements with that unlucky "verisimilitude" misunderstood, which is the curse of all the neo-classic critics,

and which comes from neglect of the Aristotelian preference of the probable-impossible to the improbable-possible. The huge Mysteries of the Middle Ages, which ranged from Heaven to Hell, which took weeks to act, and covered millennia in their action, did at least this good to the English and some other theatres—that they familiarised the mind with the neglect of this verisimilitude. But Castelvetro would have none of such neglect. His play must be adjusted, not merely in Action, but in Space and Time, as nearly as possible to the actual capacity of the stage, the actual duration of the performance.[1] And so the Fatal Three, the Weird Sisters of dramatic criticism, the vampires that sucked the blood out of nearly all European tragedy, save in England and Spain, for three centuries, make their appearance. They "enter the critical literature of Europe," as Mr Spingarn has very truly laid it down,[2] "from the time of Castelvetro."

On the freedom of Epic.

But to balance this enslaving of the Drama (in which he far exceeds Aristotle), Castelvetro frees the Epic from Aristotelian restrictions in an almost equally important manner. From his references in the *Opere Varie* to Cinthio and Pigna, it would appear that he claimed, if not priority, an even portion with them in the consideration of the subject of Epic Poetry. And though not agreeing with them altogether, he certainly agrees with them in enlarging the domains of the Epic. Poetry, he says in effect,[3] may do anything that History can do; and, like the latter, it may deal, not only with one action of one man, but with his life-actions, or with many actions of many men.

His eccentric acuteness.

With Castelvetro, however,—and it is probably the cause why pedants like Dacier undervalue him,—both the character of his compositions, and probably also the character of his mind, draw him much more to independent, though by no means always or often isolated, critical *aperçus* and judgments, than to theoretical discourses, with or

[1] In fact, he subordinates the first to the other two. *They* make it necessary. In order to appreciate his views, it is necessary to read the commentary on all the Aristotelian places concerned, and also on that touching Epic.

[2] P. 101.

[3] *Poet. d'Arist.*, p. 278.

without illustration. To put it differently, while there is usually a theory at the back of his appreciations, the appreciation generally stands in front of the theory. But however this may be, that quality of "unexpectedness," in which some æsthetic theorists have found such a charm, belongs to him as it does to few critics. One might, for instance, give half-a-dozen guesses to a tolerably ingenious person without his hitting on Castelvetro's objection to the story of Ricciardetto and Fiordispina in the *Orlando*.[1] That objection is not moral: not on the ground of what is ordinarily called decorum: not on that of digression, on that of improbability generally, on any other that is likely to occur. It is, if you please, that as Fiordispina was a Mahometan, and Ricciardetto a Christian, and as Christians and Mahometans do not believe in the same kind of Fauns and Fairies, as, further, Fauns do not eat ladies or goddesses, whether alive or dead, Ricciardetto's explanation of his alleged transformation of sex is not credible. In a modern writer this would look like an absolute absence of humour, or like a clumsy attempt at it; and I am not prepared to say that humour was a strong point with these Italian critics as a rule. But Castelvetro strikes me as being by no means exceptionally unprovided with it: and such a glaring lapse as this is probably due to the intense seriousness with which these critical questions, new as they were, presented themselves to him and to his class.

They get, as was once said, "into logical coaches"; and are perfectly content to be driven over no matter what minor precipices, and into no matter what sloughs of despond, so long as they are not actually thrown out. Yet Castelvetro at least is never dull. At one time[2] he compares the "somnolent indecorum," the *sconvenevolezza sonnachiosa*, of Homer to the practice of German innkeepers (whether observed by himself in his exile, or taken from Erasmus, one cannot say) in putting the worst wines and viands on the table first, and the best later. Elsewhere[3] he gives a very curious reason against that other *sconvenevolezza* (this sonorous word is a great favourite with him) which he too saw in the use of prose for tragedy—namely, that in reciting verse the speaker *naturally* raises his voice,

[1] *Poet. d'Arist.*, pp. 585, 586. [2] Ibid., p. 576. Ibid., p. 23.

and so makes it more audible to the audience. He has been blamed for adopting the notion of rank being necessary to tragic characters, but on this see *ante* (p. 61).

His irreverent independence in regard to Virgil is noticeable in a critic of his time, and of course especially so if one comes to him straight from Scaliger. It would not be fair to represent him as a "Virgiliomastix," but his finer critical sense enables him to perceive the superiority of Homer, in respect of whom he goes so far[1] as to say that Virgil "is not a poet." But this—*per se*, of course, excessive—had been provoked by the extravagance of Maronolatry from Vida downwards: and Castelvetro does not scruple to praise the Mantuan for his grasp, his variety of phrase, and other good things. He has an extremely sensible passage—not novel to us, but by no means a truism to his contemporaries or to a good many poets still—on what he who publishes miscellaneous poetry has to expect. By the publication, says this other Messer Lodovico, of a thing which nobody asked him for (*cosa non richiesta*) without any necessity, he publishes at the same time his confidence in himself, and affirms that the thing is good. "Which thing," goes on Castelvetro in his pitiless critical manner, "if it be found to be faulty (*rea*) and blameworthy, it convicts him who publishes it either of malice or of folly." Alas! for the minor bard.

Examples: Homer's nodding, prose in tragedy, Virgil, minor poetry.

His attitude[2] to the everlastingly vexed question of the connection of verse and poetry is very sensible, and practically anticipates, with less reluctant circumlocution, that of Coleridge, who in more things than one comes close to Castelvetro, and who probably knew him. He does not here contradict Aristotle by denying that verse is un*essential* to poetry. But he insists—and points out the undoubted truth that Aristotle's practice, whatever his theory may do, admits this—that Verse is a kind of inseparable accident of poetry,—that it is the appropriate garb and uniform thereof, which cannot be abandoned without impropriety. And

The medium and end of Poetry.

[1] *Poet. d'Arist.*, p. 545. It is fair to say that the ban is only pronounced in reference to a single point—the management of *speeches*.

[2] Ibid., p. 23.

he takes up this attitude still more emphatically in regard to the closely connected, and still more important, question of the *end* of Poetry. Here, as we have seen, the great Master of Criticism temporised. He did not doubt that this end was Delight: but in deference to ideals, partly of the Cavern, partly of the Market-place, he yokes and hampers this end with moral improvement, with Imitation, itself for itself, and so on. Castelvetro is much more uncompromising. One shudders, almost as much as one rejoices, at the audacity of a critic who in mid-sixteenth-century calmly says, "What do beginning, middle, and end matter in a poem, provided it delights?"[1] Nay, Castelvetro has reached a point of view which has since been attained by very few critics, and which some who thought they had gained this peak in Darien first may be mildly chagrined to find occupied by him—the view that there are different *qualities* of poetry, suited to delight different qualities of persons and of mind.

Uncompromising championship of Delight.

How seldom this view has been taken all critics ought to know, if they do not. Even now he who climbs the peak must lay his account with stone-throwing from the garrisons of other points. That Burns administers, and has a right to administer, one delight to one class of mind, Shelley another to another; that Béranger is not to be denied the wine of poetry because his vintage is not the vintage of Hugo: that Longfellow, and Cowper, and George Herbert are not to be sneered at because their delight is the delight of cheering but not of intoxication; that Keble is not intrinsically the less a poet because he is not Beddoes, or Charles Wesley because he is not Charles Baudelaire—or *vice versa* in all the cases—these are propositions which not every critic—which perhaps not very many critics—will admit even in the abstract, and which in practice almost every critic falsifies and renounces at some time or other.[2] But they are propositions which follow fairly, and indeed inevitably, from Castelvetro's theory of the necessary end, Delight,

[1] *Poet. d'Arist.*, p. 158.

[2] It is perhaps well to meet a possible, though surely not probable objection "Do you deny *ranks* in poetry?" Certainly not—but only the propriety of *excluding* ranks which do not seem, to the censor, of the highest.

and the varying adjustment of the delighting agent to the patient's faculty of being delighted.

He is perhaps less sound in his absolute condemnation of "knowledge" as material for poetry. He is right in black-marking Fracastoro from this point of view: but he is certainly not right in extending the black mark to Lucretius. The fact is, that even he could not wrench himself sufficiently free from the trammels of old time to see that in the treatment lies the faculty of delighting, and that therefore, on his own scheme, the treatment is the poetry.

His exceptional interest and importance.

There are few writers to be dealt with in this volume—none, I think, already dealt with—to whom it would be more satisfactory to devote the minutest handling than to Castelvetro. He has been called by Mr Spingarn "revolutionary." The term, in an American mouth, probably has no unfavourable connotation; but waiving that connotation altogether, I should be inclined to demur to it. Even the *Vehmgericht* (if one may rely on the leading case of *Vgr.* v. *Philipson,* reported by Sir Walter Scott) acquitted of High Treason those who had spoken evil of it in countries where its authority was not acknowledged, and indeed its name hardly known. Now, Castelvetro was dealing—as we must, for his honour as well as for our comprehension of him, remember that he dealt—with modern as well as with ancient literature at once, and instead of adopting the injudicious though natural separation of Minturno, or the one-sided treatment of Scaliger, was constantly exploring, and always more or less keeping in view, territories not merely in which Aristotle's writ did not run, but which in Aristotle's time were No Man's Land and *terra incognita.* He can no more be regarded as a revolutionary or a rebel, in framing new laws for the new facts, than a man could be regarded in either light for disregarding the Curfew Law at the North Pole, or for disobeying sumptuary regulations as to the use of woollen in the tropics. His *ethos* is really that of the self-reliant, resourceful, and adventurous explorer, as he has been called—of the experimenter in new material and under new conditions. That the paths he strikes out sometimes lead to *culs-de-sac*—that the experiments he

makes sometimes fail, is nothing more than is natural, than is inevitable in the circumstances.

More generally his value is great, and we may forgive him (especially since he did *us* little or no harm) the binding of the Unities on the necks of Frenchmen and Italians, in consideration of the inestimable service which he did in standing up for Epic—that is, Romantic—Unity of a different kind, and in formulating, in a "No Surrender" fashion, the doctrine of Delight as the Poetic Criterion. By doing this he not merely fought for the freedom of the long narrative poem (which, as it happens, has been a matter of minor importance, save at rare intervals, since his time), but he unknowingly safeguarded the freedom of the long narrative prose romance or novel, which was to be the most important new contribution of modern times to literature. Nor may it be amiss once more to draw attention to a more general merit still, the inestimable *indifference* with which he continually handles ancient and modern examples. Only by this—the wisest "indifference of the wise"—can true criticism be reached. It is an indifference which neglects no change of condition, which takes count of all features and circumstances, but which, for that very reason, declines to allow ancient literature to prescribe unconditionally to modern, or modern to ancient, or either to mediæval. As to this last, Castelvetro has, and could be expected to have, nothing to say: as to the others, he is more eloquent in practice than in express theory. But his practice speaks his conviction, and it is the practice by which, and by which alone, the serene temples of the really Higher Criticism can be reached.

Tasso and the controversies over the Gerusalemme.

The last third of the century provides only one author who deserves (though he has seldom received) at least equal attention with Scaliger and Castelvetro; but it has, like the second, a crowd of minor critics who must not be wholly passed over. Moreover, it boasts—if such a thing be a subject of boasting—one equally famous and weary controversy, that over the *Gerusalemme.* This, which expects the critical historian as its prey, and will test his powers to the utmost if haply he may wrestle free of it at once without inadequacy and without tedium, we may

dare first: may take the interesting single figure of Patrizzi or Patrici second, and then may sweep the rest into a conclusion, which will itself leave not a little summarising to be done in the Interchapter succeeding this Book.

Torquato Tasso was, in more ways than one, fated to the ordeal of controversy. His work would, in the already unfolded state and temper of Italian criticism on the subject of the "heroic poem," have invited it in any case; but he had, in a manner, inherited the adventure. His father, Bernardo, as has been briefly recorded above, had himself taken much interest in critical questions; and after being at first a classicist, had come round to the position of Cinthio. It was Torquato's object, by argument and example alike, to reconcile the combatants. His *Discorsi* did not appear till late in 1587;[1] but they are said to have been written some twenty years earlier, after the appearance of Minturno's Italian book. His plan is as simply obvious—shall we say as obviously defective?—as that of the immortal contributor to the *Eatanswill Gazette*. He, too, "combined his information." Some kind of Unity is to be imposed on the Romantic Variety; and though this Unity cannot possibly be the Aristotelian, it need not be quite such a different kind as that of Castelvetro. It is to be organic, but may permit itself the organs of a complex animal system.

Nor did Tasso stick to generalities; nor did he shrink from giving hostages to fortune, and his enemies, by embodying his ideas in practice. These ideas we have already seen floating in various critical minds from Fracastorius to Castelvetro. The "heroic poem"—for his theory and his example alike consecrated that word for use, instead of either "epic" or "romance," for nearly two centuries—must not be pure invention, but must avail itself of the authority of history. It must be animated by religion, true religion—that is to say, Christianity. It must have the supernatural. The hero must be a pious and moral, if not necessarily faultless, character. It must not be too dogmatic—that the poet may be free. It must deal with ancient or modern history so as to be neither absolutely unfamiliar, nor too familiar in its atmosphere and manners. The

[1] At Venice, but *ad instanza* of a Ferrarese bookseller.

persons, things, and scenes must be noble and stately. It will probably strike every one that this is an admirable receipt for a historical novel; and thus do we constantly find blind strivings at things that cannot yet get themselves born. But whether it is an equally good receipt for a poem may be doubted. Some of us, at least, have no doubt that the *Gerusalemme*, which is faithfully constructed in accordance with it, is not nearly so good a poem as the *Orlando*, for the graceless graces of which it was expressly devised to substitute something more orderly and decent.

The extensive and execrable controversy which followed did not, however, turn wholly, though it very largely turned, on the actual case of Ariosto *v.* Tasso. But, as usually happens, the partisans of the latter provoked it by unadvised laudations of him, and worse-advised attacks on his great predecessor. The Florentines had not, as such, any special reason for championing the "turnip-eating" Ariosto; but Tasso had offended the coteries of the Della Crusca, and a Della Cruscan chief, the Salviati already mentioned, took the field against the author of the *Gerusalemme.* He sallied forth in turn; and the bickering became universal. Five mortal volumes of the standard edition of Tasso appear to be occupied with an incomplete collection of the documents on the subject — a collection which I have not read and do not intend to read, but which whosoever rejoices in such things may, if he likes, supplement with all the *Histories of Italian Literature* from Tiraboschi downwards, and all the Lives of Tasso, especially those of Serassi in the eighteenth century and Solerti in the nineteenth.

The most important upshot of the controversy is not itself in dispute. The impregnable historical position of Cinthio was strangely neglected by both sides (except by Ishmaelite outsiders like Bruno and Patrizzi); nor was even the modified Aristotelianism and "Unitarianism" of Castelvetro, as a rule, attempted. Both sides swore fealty to Aristotle, and all debated what Aristotle meant—what Unity was. And, in spite of the exceptions, this was the condition in which the question was left to the next century.

The controversy, like that between Caro and Castelvetro,

and (I fear it must be said) like literary controversies in general, did not pass off without a muddying of the waters. Salviati, Tasso's chief adversary, and author of the dialogue *L'Infarinato* against him, had at first been a great admirer and almost flatterer of the *Gerusalemme*, had offered the author his friendship, had praised his scheme, and had actually proposed to celebrate it in that very commentary on the *Poetics* which Mr Spingarn (who has read it in MS.) describes as actually devoted to "undermining Tasso's pretensions." Exactly by what personal, or cliquish, or patriotic offences he was induced to take the opposite line, belongs to the obscure, dull, and disgusting history of these literary squabbles generally, and we need not concern ourselves with it. The points "for us" in the whole matter are, first, that the controversy shows the strong hold which a certain conception of criticism (whether the right one or not) had obtained of the Italian mind; and, secondly, that the main question on which it turned—"What *sort* of Unity heroic poems must have?"—"In what manner must the precepts of Aristotle be interpreted and adjusted?"—shows more than the shadow of coming Neo-Classicism. The path of safety and truth which Giraldi and Pigna had opened up many years earlier, and which even Castelvetro, Unitarian as he was, had been careful to leave open—the path starting, that is to say, from the positions that Aristotle had not all literature before him, and that the kinds of literature which he had not before him could not, therefore, be subject to his dicta—was now ignored or barred. *Apparent dirœ facies*, the faces of the Unities, and there is nothing left to do, in the general opinion, but to wrangle about their exact lineaments.

Tasso's Critical writings

The critical work of Tasso is far from inconsiderable, and only a sense of duty prevents the consideration of it here at greater length. It consists[1] of the *Discorsi* which, as noted above, appeared at Venice (with divers *Lettere Poetiche*) in one of the thin small parchment-covered quartos for which the student of this literature begins, after a time, to feel a distinct affection. The much longer and

[1] These pieces form the major part of Cesare Guasti's *Prose Diverse di T. T.* (2 vols., Florence, 1875).

later *Discorsi del Poema Epico* partly repeat, partly correct, partly expand, the earlier work; and sometimes stand in a curious relation to it.[1] But this by no means exhausts the tale. Tasso, nothing if not conscientious, appears to have taken his art in general, and his work in particular, very seriously indeed. He makes extracts from Castelvetro; writes on the Allegory of his own *Gerusalemme*, an Apology for it in dialogue, a formal Reply to the strictures of the Della Cruscans, a tractate in answer to Patrizzi's defence of Ariosto, another on Poetical Differences, a long "Judgment of the *Conquistata*," a discourse on the Art of the Dialogue. Also he has some curious considerations on three Canzoni of Pigna's entitled *Le Tre Sorelle*, written in honour of Lucrezia Bendidio, and dealing with Sacred and Profane Love. These considerations have the additional interest of being addressed to Leonora d'Este, and of breathing a peculiar blend of that half-sensual, half-Platonic Renaissance rapture of which the great *locus* is the discourse assigned to Bembo at the end of Castiglione's *Courtier*, with the religiosity which we more specially think of in Tasso. He has an elaborate lecture on a single sonnet of La Casa,—a great favourite of Tasso's, and deservedly so as far as his serious poetry goes,—and some minor matter of the kind.

To the writing of this not inconsiderable *corpus* of criticism Tasso brought, besides his own genius and the interesting asso-

and position.

ciation of his creative power, really wide reading, and, as has been said, an indefatigable interest in the subject. He exercised a good deal of influence in the time to come—both Milton and Dryden, for instance (the latter again and again), refer to his critical work. Yet it may perhaps be said without presumption that this criticism is rather more interesting to a student of Tasso, or to one who wishes to obtain at famous hands some knowledge of the Italian sixteenth century *ethos* in this kind without going any further, than to the student of criticism itself. Tasso is very fairly repre-

[1] For instance, my attention was drawn by Mr Ker to the fact that the description of the subject of the *third* original *Discorso* given at the end of the *second* (f. 24 original ed. vol. i. p. 48, Guasti) does not in the least fit the actual contents, while the missing matter is duly supplied in the later book (i. 162 *sq.*, Guasti).

sentative of it in its combination of Plato and Aristotle, in its anxiety to get general notions of poetry and poetic kinds, in its respect for the ancients, in its ethical turn. But he is rather more representative than original or distinct; and his criticism is not perhaps improved by the very natural fact that sometimes avowedly, and probably in most cases really, it is less a disinterested consideration of Poetry in general than an apologetic of the poetry of Torquato Tasso. And as that poetry itself, beautiful as it often is, is notoriously something of a compromise between the Romantic and the Classical, so the criticism which is connected with it is compromising and compromised likewise. Tasso has many interesting observations, intelligent *aperçus*, just remarks: he is a link, and a very early link, in the apostolic succession of those who have held and taught the great doctrine that poetry makes the familiar unfamiliar, the accustomed strange and new.[1] But he has not shaken himself free enough to gain the standpoint of his friendly antagonist Patrizzi, and to recognise, even imperfectly, that the secret of poetry is treatment *poeticamente*, and that only the historic method unfettered by rules will tell you what *poeticamente* has been and is, even thus leaving unknown what it will be.

Patrizzi: his Poetica.

At about the same time, however, a last, and the most vigorous, if not altogether the best informed, attempt was made to put the matter on this true historical basis. A year (1586) before the publication of Tasso's *Discorsi*, and of his *Apologia*, though long after the writing of the first, and not without reference to himself and the dispute between his partisans and those of Ariosto, there had been printed at Ferrara, in two parts, one of the most important and original of the numerous treatises which appeared during this half-century or more, under the title of *Della Poetica*. It was the work of Francesco Patrizzi (as he is generally cited in books, though both in the title-pages of this work, and in the signature of his Dedication, it is spelt Patrici). The inspiration of the book was, at least partly, due to the violent anti-

[1] For instance, in the opening of the first *Discorsi* (f. 2, *verso*): *Variamente tessendolo, di commune proprio, e di vecchio novo il facevano.*

Peripateticism of which Patrizzi was at this time the twin champion with Bruno;[1] and while we must no doubt thank this party spirit for being in great part the cause of the volume, there may be room for objecting that it somewhat obscures the pure critical value of the treatises. That value, however, remains great, and would be great even if there were nothing in the book but an ill-carried-out idea. For its idea is the basing of the inquiry into poetry, not on *a priori* discussion of the nature of the thing, and of its exponent the poet,—not on previous authority as to these questions,—but on a historical examination of extant poetical composition. It is, of course, true that an examination of the kind was ready at hand in Scaliger's book. But nothing was further from Scaliger's mind than to *base* his inquiry on this: on the contrary, it comes late, and is merely intended to supply illustration and texts for verbal criticism.

Patrizzi's plan is quite different. His book consists of two parts or "decades"—*La Deca Istoriale* and *La Deca Disputata;* and though in some copies (my own is an instance) the cart is perversely put before the horse, this is evidently a mere stupidity of the binder, due to the fact that both books, which are separately paged and title-paged, are of the same year (1586), and perhaps to the other fact that the Dedication of the *Disputata* to Don Ferrando Gonzaga, Signor di Guastalla, is dated, while that of the *Istoriale* to Lucrezia d'Este, Duchess of Urbino, is not. But the very first line of the *Disputata* makes references to the other as already done.

The Deca Istoriale.

That the "History of Poetry" of *il gran Patricio*, as his commendatory sonneteers love to call him, should be either completely exhaustive or impeccably methodical, it would be unreasonable to expect. There are

[1] Bruno himself, in more places than one, takes the same line; indeed his statement in the *Eroici Furori*, that "the rules are derived from the poetry, and there are as many kinds and sorts of true rules as there are kinds and sorts of true poets," is the conclusion of the whole matter, and would have done his friend Sidney a great deal of good. (The passage may be found at p. 38 of the first vol. of the translation by I. Williams (London, 1887, or in the original, ed. Lagarde, p. 625).) But Bruno's genius, as erratic as it was brilliant, could not settle to mere Rhetoric.

indeed some surprising touches,[1] both of knowledge and of liberality, in his admissions of the *Architrenius* and the *Anticlaudiánus*, of Marbod and Bede. But for the most part he confines himself to classic and scriptural authors; and his notices are rather those of a classical dictionary maker, or hand-list man, than of a critical historian in the best sense. Still, all things must have beginnings; and it is a very great beginning indeed to find the actual documents of the matter produced and arranged in any orderly fashion, even if we do begin a little in the air with Giubale and Giafeto, and end a little in the dark with Gaufredo and Guntero.

Only when he has spent 150 pages on this arrangement does Patrizzi pass to his Second Book, in which (once more in the true logical order) he arranges the productions of his poets in *kinds*, of which he is a generous and careful distributor. The much shorter Third deals with the kinds of verses; and the Fourth with the festivals and spectacles at which poetry was produced, the Fifth continuing this with special reference to Games and Contests. The Sixth deals with the singing of ancient poetry; the Seventh with its accompanying Music; the Eighth with Rhythm; the Ninth with the Chorus; and the Tenth with the persons who *produced* ancient poetry—rhapsodists, priests, actors, &c.

It is, of course, to be observed that all this is strictly limited to *Ancient* Poetry; indeed Patrizzi repeats the very words religiously in the title of every Book. To support his examination with a further one of modern or even Italian "vulgar" poetry does not seem to have occurred to him. Perhaps, indeed—since he refers, as has been said, in the very first line of his second part to *la lunga e faticosa istoria delle cose a poeti, a poemi, e a poetica spettanti* as "condetta a fine" with a sort of sigh of relief—he may have thought that his readers would not stand it. But it is noteworthy that in this Decade he constantly cites Italian writers, and that the last forty pages of his Tenth Book consist of a *Trimerone* of

The Deca Disputata.

[1] Especially when they are contrasted with the superciliousness (*v. supra*) of Lilius Giraldus and Scaliger.

controversy with Tasso himself, amicable (they were actually friends), but by no means unanimated.

The First Book of the *Disputata* is given up to the cause of poetry, which Patrizzi, again in accordance with Bruno, decides to be Enthusiasm (*Furori*[1]), relying much on Plato, especially on the Tynnichus passage (*v. supra*, vol. i. p. 20), and even a little on Aristotle. The Second Book attacks, with a good deal of acerbity, and some wire-drawing, but also with learning, acuteness, and common-sense, the Aristotelian doctrine of Imitation, and the philosopher's order and distribution of poetic kinds. The Third follows this up by an inquiry whether, in a general way, Poetry is Imitation at all; the Fourth by one whether the poet is an imitator. And the conclusion of the three, enforced with great dialectical skill, and with a real knowledge of Greek criticism,—that of Plato, Longinus, and the Rhetoricians, as well as Aristotle's,—is that Poetry is *not* Imitation, or at any rate that Imitation is not proper and peculiar to poets. In which point it will go hard but any catholic student of literature, however great his respect for Aristotle, must now "say ditto" to Patrizzi.

In his Fifth Book Patrizzi tackles a matter of far greater importance—for after all the discussion, "Is Poetry Imitation, or is it not?" is very mainly a logomachy. As Miss Edgeworth's philosophic boy remarks, "You may call your hat your cadwallader," when you have once explained that by this term you mean "a black thing that you wear on your head." But the question of this Fifth Book, "Whether Poetry can be in prose?" is of a very different kind. It goes, not to words but to things, and to the very roots of them; it involves—if it may not be said actually to *be*—the gravest, deepest, most vital question of literary criticism itself; and on the answer given to it will turn

[1] It would be rather interesting to know whether the *Furor Poeticus* of the second part of the *Return from Parnassus* has anything to do with Patrizzi. There *need* be no connection, of course; but the correspondence of England and Italy at this time in matters literary was so quick and intimate that there *might* have been. Patrizzi's book appeared in the probable year of Shakespeare's going to London, and of the production of *Tamburlaine*. Bruno had then left England.

the further answer which must be given to a whole crowd of minor questions.

On this point *il gran Patricio* has at least this quality of greatness, that he knows his own mind with perfect clearness, and expounds it as clearly as he knows it. His conclusion[1] is, "That verse is so proper and so essential to every manner of poetry that, without verse, no composition either can or ought to be Poetry." This is refreshing, whether we consider that Patrizzi has taken the best way of establishing his dogma or not. He proceeds as usual by posing and examining the places —four in number—in which Aristotle deals with the question; and discusses them with proper exactness from the verbal point of view, dwelling specially, as we should expect, on the term ψιλὸς for prose. Then, as we should expect also, he enters into a still longer examination of the very obscure and difficult passage about the Mimes and the Socratic Dialogues. To say that the argument is conducted in a manner wholly free from quibbling and wire-drawing would perhaps be too much. Patrizzi—and his logic is certainly not the worse for it—was still in the habit of bringing things to directly syllogistic head now and then; and of this modern readers are too often impatient. But he does succeed in convicting Aristotle of using language by no means wholly consistent; and he succeeds still better in getting and keeping fast hold of that really final argument which made De Quincey so angry when Whately so forcibly put it[2]—the argument that from time immemorial everybody, who has had no special point to prove, when speaking of a poem has meant something in verse, that everybody, with the same exception, has called things in verse poems.

Our author's acuteness is not less seen in the selection and treatment of the subject of his Sixth Book, which is the intimately allied question—indeed, the same question from another point of view—"Whether the Fable rather than the verse makes the property of the poem?" He is equally uncompromising on this point; and has of course no difficulty in showing—

[1] *Deca Disputata*, p. 122.

[2] See Whately, *Rhetoric*, III. iii. 3, p. 216 (ed. 8, London, 1857), and De Quincey, *Rhetoric* (*Works*, ed. Masson, x. 131).

against Plutarch rather than Aristotle—that "fable" in the sense of "*made-up* subject" is not only not necessary to Poetry, but does not exist in any of the most celebrated poems of the most celebrated poets.[1] But he is not even yet satisfied in his onslaught on the Four Places. He devotes a special Book (VII. —it is true that all the constituents of this group of books are short) to Aristotle's contrast of Empedocles and Homer, labelling the latter only as poet, the former as rather Physiologist. And with this he takes the same course, convicting Aristotle, partly out of his own mouth,[2] partly by citing the "clatter" (*schiamaccio*) which even his own commentators had made on this subject. And, indeed, at the time even the stoutest Aristotelians must have been puzzled to uphold a judgment which, taken literally, would have excluded from the name of poetry the adored *Georgics* of old, and the admired *Syphilis* of recent, times.

But, indefatigable as he is, he is still not "satiate with his victory," and in the Eighth Book attacks yet another facet of the same great problem, "Whether Poetry can be based upon, or formed from, History?" This was, as we have seen, a question which had already interested the Italians much; and Patrizzi in handling it draws nearer and nearer to his controversy with Tasso, whom he here actually mentions. He has little difficulty in showing that Aristotle's contrast between Poetry and History itself by no means denies historical subjects to the poet, and that Aristotle is not at all responsible for, or in accordance with, Plutarch's extravagant insistence on "mendacity" as a poetic *proprium*. "All the materials comprised in Art, or Science, or study," says he[3] (in that manner of his which we have already called refreshing, and which we shall meet again seldom in this volume), "can be suitable subjects for poetry and poems, *provided that they be poetically treated.*" Verily, a *gran Patricio!*

The subject of the Ninth Book is less important and more

[1] *Deca Disputata*, p. 134 *sq.*

[2] Of course an Aristotelian advocate may justly point out that the Master after all only says μᾶλλον ἢ ποιητὴν, without absolutely denying the latter title to Empedocles.

[3] *Deca Disputata*, p. 175.

purely antiquarian, but interesting enough. It discusses the question whether ancient poetry necessarily involved "harmony" and "rhythm," and what these terms exactly mean—dancing and gestic accompaniment being considered as well as music. Patrizzi decides, sensibly enough on the historical comparison, that all these things, though old and not unsuitable companions of poetry, are in no sense formative or constitutive parts of Poetry itself.[1]

The Trimerone *on Tasso.*

The title-question of the Tenth Book is, "Whether the modes of Imitation are three?" He discusses this generally, and specially in regard to narrative and dramatic delivery of the poetic matter, and then passes in an appendix (which, however, he declares to be part of the book) to the *Trimerone* of reply to Tasso. This is a necessarily rather obscure summary, with some quotations, of a fuller controversy between the two, complicated by glances at the other literature of the *Gerusalemme* quarrel, especially at the work of Camillo Pellegrino.[2] To disentangle the spool, and wind it in expository form, is out of the question here. Fortunately the piece concludes with a tabular statement[3] of forty-three opposition theses to Pellegrino and Tasso. A good many of these turn on rather "pot-and-kettle" recriminations between Homerists and Ariostians; but the general principles of comparative criticism are fairly observed in them, and there is no acerbity of language. In fact, although on some of the points of the controversy Patrizzi took the Della Cruscan side, it does not seem to have interrupted his friendship with Tasso, who attended his lectures,[4] and whose funeral he attended.

The intrinsic importance of Patrizzi's criticism may be matter of opinion; but it will hardly be denied that both its system and its conclusions are widely different from those of nearly all the Italian critics whom we have yet considered, though there

[1] *Deca Disputata*, p. 192.

[2] Who had been *pars non minima* in the exaltation of Tasso and depreciation of Ariosto. See Spingarn, pp. 122, 123; and Serassi, *Vita di Tasso* (Rome, 1785), pp. 331-348.

[3] *Deca Disputata*, pp. 246-249.

[4] This was long after the publication of the *Trimerone* (1586), and when Patrizzi had been translated from Ferrara to a newly founded chair of Platonic Philosophy at Rome. *V.* Serassi, *op. cit.*, p. 475.

may be approaches to both in Cinthio on the one hand and in Castelvetro on the other. The bickering with Aristotle on particular points is of much less importance than the constant implicit, and not rare explicit, reliance on the historic method—on the poets and the poems that exist, the ideas of poetry conveyed by common parlance, the body of the written Word in short, and not the letter of the written Rule. I am not sure that Patrizzi ever lays down the doctrine that "Rules follow practice, not practice rules," with quite the distinctness of Bruno in the passage cited above.[1] But he makes a fight for it in a passage of the *Trimerone*,[2] and his entire critical method involves it more or less. If he does not quote modern literature much, it is obviously because the controversy in which he was mixing took its documents and texts mainly from the ancients; but he is so well acquainted with the modern literature, not merely of his own language, that he actually cites[3] Claude Fauchet's *Origines de la Poésie Française*, which had appeared in 1581. That his interest in the whole matter may have been philosophical rather than strictly, or at least exclusively, literary is very possible—he was actually a Professor of Philosophy; but however this may be, he has hit on the solid causeway under the floods, and has held his way steadily along it for as far as he chose to go. Nay, in the sentence which has been chosen for the epigraph of this Book, he has kept it open for all to the end of Poetry and of Time.

Remarkable position of Patrizzi.

There are, however, few propositions in literature truer than this—that it is of no present use to be wise for the future. If a man chooses the wisdom of the morrow, he must be content for the morrow to appreciate him—which it does not always, though no one but a poor creature will trouble himself much about that. Patrizzi had a really considerable reputation, and deserved it; but in matters literary he was two hundred years in front of his time, and his time avenged

Sed contra mundum.

[1] P. 95.

[2] Pp. 221, 222. Of course it is possible to take exception even to *poeticamente* — to ask "Yes; but what *is* this?" But the demurrer is only specious. The very adverbial form shifts the sovereignty from the *subject* to the *treatment*.

[3] Ibid., p. 235.

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itself by taking little practical notice of him.[1] The critical writers of the last fifteen or twenty years of the century are fairly numerous; and though none of them can pretend to great importance, the names of some have survived, and the writings of some of these are worth examination, certainly by the historian and perhaps by the student. But the general drift of them is usually anti-Patrician and pro-Aristotelian, in that very decidedly sophisticated interpretation of Aristotle which was settling itself down upon the world as critical orthodoxy.

The latest group of sixteenth-century Critics.

Among them we may mention one or two which, though actually earlier than Patrizzi, are later than Castelvetro, and will help to complete, as far as we can here attempt it, the conspectus of that remarkable flourishing time of Italian critical inquiry which actually founded, and very nearly finished, the edifice of European criticism generally for three centuries at least. The authors to whom we return are Partenio, Viperano, Piccolomini, Gilio da Fabriano, and Mazzoni; those to whom we proceed are Jason Denores, Gabriele Zinano, and Faustino Summo. This latter, who, with an odd coincidence of name, date, and purport, does really sum up the sixteenth century for Aristotle, and so govern the decisions of the seventeenth and eighteenth, had been immediately preceded in the same sense by Buonamici,[2] Ingegneri,[3] and others.

Partenio, like Minturno and some others, gave his thoughts on the subject to the world in both "vulgar" and "regular";[4]

Partenio.

but the two forms, while not identical, are closer together than is sometimes the case, though there is in the Latin a curious appended anthology of translation and parallel in the two languages. He is rather a formal person (as indeed may be judged from his particular addiction to Hermogenes as an authority), but he is not destitute of wits. Through-

[1] The way in which Patrizzi is referred to after the lapse of a century by Baillet and Gibert (*v. inf.*, p. 320) shows at once the sort of *magni nominis umbra* which still made itself felt, and the absence of any definite knowledge to give body to the shade. For his dealings with Rhetoric, see next Book, p. 329.

[2] *Discorsi Poetici*, 1597.

[3] *Poesia Rappresentativa*, 1598.

[4] *Della Imitatione Poetica*, Venice, 1560; *De Poetica Imitatione*, ibid., 1565.

out he quotes Italian as well as Latin examples, and refers to Italian critics such as Trissino; while in one place he gives something like a regular survey of contemporary Latin poetry by Italians from Pontanus to Cotta. He lays special stress on the importance of poetic diction; he thinks that Art can and should improve nature; but he is as classical as the stiffest *perruque* of the French anti-Romantic school in believing Aristotle and Horace to contain everything necessary to poetical salvation.

Viperano.

Viperano[1] (who by a natural error is sometimes cited as Vi*tu*perano) somewhere makes the half-admission, half-boast, *scripsimus autem varios libros de variis rebus,* and is indeed a sort of rhetorical bookmaker who oscillates between instruction and epideictic. This character is sufficiently reflected in his *De Arte Poetica.* He had some influence—even as far as Spain (*v. inf.*)

Piccolomini.

Piccolomini's book,[2] which is a compact small quarto of 422 pages, differs in arrangement from Castelvetro's merely in not giving the Greek—the *particelle* of the original in translation being followed by solid blocks of *annotationi.* The author was of that well-known type of Renaissance scholar which aspired to a generous if perhaps impossible universalism; and as he puts this encyclopædic information at the service of his notes, they are naturally things not easily to be given account of in any small space, or with definite reference to a particular subject. That Piccolomini, however, was not destitute of acuteness or judgment to back his learning, reference to test passages will very easily show. He has not allowed the possible force of the μᾶλλον, for instance, to escape him in the Homer-and-Empedocles passage referred to a little earlier—indeed Maggi had put him in the right way here. But, in this

[1] His *De Arte Poetica* seems to have first appeared at Antwerp in 1579: I know it in his *Opera,* Naples, 1606.

[2] *Annotationi di M. Alessandro Piccolomini nel Libro della Poetica d'Aristotele:* Vinegia. The dedication to Cardinal Ferdinand dei Medici is dated Ap. 20, 1572, from Piccolomini's native town of Sienna, where he became coadjutor-archbishop. Some of Salviati's MS. observations, printed by Mr Spingarn, seem to show that even Piccolomini's contemporaries regarded him as a little too *polymathic,* while his *Raffaella* exhibits the less grave side of the Renaissance. But he was now getting an old man, and died six years later at the full three score and ten.

and other cases, he is somewhat too fond of "hedging." "We must remember this; but we must not forget that," &c. The inspiriting downrightness of Scaliger on the one side, and Patrizzi on the other, is not in him; and we see the approach, in this subject also, of a time of mere piling up of authorities, and marshalling of arguments *pro* and *con*, to the darkening rather than the illumination of judgment.

Gilio.

The *Topica Poetica* of Giovanni Andrea Gilio da Fabriano[1] comes well next to Piccolomini, because the pair are characteristic examples of the two parallel lines in which, as we have seen throughout, Italian criticism proceeds during the century. In plan it presents no inconsiderable resemblance to that work of our own Puttenham (*v. infra*) which followed it at no great interval; but it is, as its special title will have indicated to the expert, even more definitely rhetorical. In fact, it must be one of the very latest treatises in which, on the partial precedent of antiquity, Poetics are brought *directly* under Rhetoric. We actually start with accounts, illustrated by poetical examples in the vernacular, of the Deliberative, Demonstrative, and Judicial kinds; we pass thence to Invention, Imitation, and Style; and thence again to Decorum, the Proper, and so forth, all still illustrated from the vulgar tongue mainly, but with a Latin example here and there. And this finishes the short First Book. The longer Second is the most strictly "topical," with its sections (at first sight bewildering to the modern non-expert mind) on Definition and Etymology, on Genus and Species, on Example and Induction, on Proceeding from Less to Greater and from Greater to Less, on Amplification, Authority, Custom, and Love. The Third is wholly on Figures of Speech, and the Fourth on Tropes or Figures of "Conceit." The poetical illustration is all-pervading, and there is an odd appendix of sonnets from ladies of Petrarch's time. The book is chiefly worth notice here because, as has been said, it is one of the latest—perhaps, with the exception of Puttenham's own, the actually latest—of its special subdivision that we shall have to notice,—the subdivision, that is to say, in which

[1] In Venetia, 1580. Why has Time, in the title-page woodcut of this, an hour-glass as head-dress, but a scourge instead of a scythe in his hand?

the literature handled is absolutely subordinate to an artificial system of classification, in which the stamped and registered ticket is everything, so that, when the critic has tied it on, his task is done.

Mazzoni.

Giacomo Mazzóni is perhaps better known[1] than at least some of the subjects of this chapter, owing to his connection with Dante. He first, in 1573, published at Cesena a brief *Difesa di Dante* of some fifty folios, in fairly large print, and followed it up fourteen years later with an immense *Della Difesa*, containing 750 pages of very small print without the index. The points of the actual *Difesa* are not uncurious—such as an argument that discourses on Poetry are not improper for the philosopher, and that Dante is a particularly philosophical poet, in fact encyclopædic. From the Imitation point of view the Comedy can be easily defended, as it is a real following of action, and not the mere relation of a dream: and as dealing with *costume* (manners) it is a comedy, not a tragedy or heroic poem. The *Della Difesa*, on the other hand, is a wilderness of erudition and controversy, arranged under abstract heads ("how the poets have conducted themselves towards the predicaments of Time and Place," &c.), and diverging into inquiries and sub-inquiries of the most intricate character—the trustworthiness of dreams,[2] the opinions held of them in antiquity, the nature and kinds of allegory, Dante's orthodoxy—in short, all things Dantean, and very many others. If I cannot with Mr Spingarn[3] discover "a whole new theory of poetry" in the *Difesa* itself, I am ready to admit that almost anything might be discovered in the *Della Difesa*.

The *Poetica* of Jason Denores[4] is remarkable from one point of view for its thoroughgoing and "charcoal-burner" Aristotelianism, from another for the extraordinary and meticulous

[1] Milton had read Mazzoni, and cites him.

[2] There is a large folding table of the causes and kinds of visions.

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 124.

[4] Padua, 1588. Denores (whose name is often separated into "de Nores") was, like Patrizzi, a Professor of Philosophy, and, like Piccolomini, very polymathic and polygraphic. He had a year earlier published a *Discourse* (which I have not) on the Philosophical Principles of poetical kinds, and had very much earlier still, in 1553, commented the *Epistola ad Pisones*. His son Pietro was an affectionate and attentive disciple of Tasso's in his last days at Rome.

precision of its typographical arrangements. How many sizes and kinds of type there are in Jason's book I am not enough of an expert in printing to attempt to say exactly: and the arrangement of his page is as precious as the selection of his type. Sometimes his text overflows the opened sheet, with decent margins indeed but according to ordinary proportions; at others (and by no means always because he requires side-notes) it is contracted to a canal down the centre, with banks broader than itself. It is, however, when Denores comes to the tabular arrangement and subdivision of statement and argument, in which nearly all these writers delight, that he becomes most eccentric. As many divisions, so many parallel columns; under no circumstances will his rigid equity give one section the advantage of appearing on the *recto* of a leaf while the others are banished to the *verso*. This is all very well when the divisions are two or three or even four. But when, as sometimes happens, there are six or even eight, the cross-reading of the parallel columns is at once tempting and conducive to madness. As each column is but some half-inch broad, almost every word longer than a monosyllable has to be broken into, and as only a single *em* of space is allowed between the columns, there is a strong temptation to "follow the line." By doing this you get such bewilderments as

Denores.

"gue do-diEdip-di Laio, ttappas-menosia ra il Poe mu tio lipo, per," &c.,

a moderate dose of which should suffice to drive a person of some imagination, and excessive nerves, to Bedlam. Read straight, however, Denores is much more sedative, not to say soporific, than exciting: and his dealings with Tragedy, the Heroic Poem, and Comedy have scarcely any other interest than as symptoms of that determination towards unqualified, if not wholly unadulterated, Aristotelianism which has been remarked upon.

Il Sogno, overo della Poesia, by Gabriele Zinano,[1] dedicated at

[1] I have not found much about Zinano near to hand, nor have I thought it worth while to go far afield in search of him. Tiraboschi (vii., 1716, 1900) names him as a poet-miscellanist in almost every kind. My copy, of 42 duodecimo pages, has been torn out of what was its cover, and may have been its company.

Zinano.

Reggio on the 15th October 1590 to the above-mentioned Ferrando Gonzaga of Guastalla, is a very tiny treatise, written with much pomp of style, but apparently unnoticed by most of the authorities on the subject. The author had studied Patrizzi (or Patrici, as he, too, calls him), and was troubled in his mind about Imitation, and about the equivocal position of Empedocles. He comforts himself as he goes on, and at last comes to a sort of eclectic opportunism, which extols the instruction *and* delight of poetry, admits that it can practically take in all arts and sciences, but will not admit fable as making it without verse, or verse without fable, and denies that both, even together, make it necessarily good. The little piece may deserve mention for its rarity, and yet once more, as symptomatic of the hold which critical discussion had got of the Italian mind, Zinano is evidently full of the *Deca Istoriale* and the *Deca Disputata*, but alarmed at their heresies.

Mazzone da Miglionico, &c.

Paolo Beni, the antagonist of Summo, the champion of prose for tragedy as well as for comedy, and a combatant in the controversy over the *Pastor Fido*, which succeeded in time, and almost equalled in tedium, that over the *Gerusalemme*, will come best in the next Book; and though I have not neglected, I find little to say about, Correa[1] and others.[2] A sign of the times is the somewhat earlier *I Fiori della Poesia*[3] of Mazzone da Miglionico (not to be confounded with the above-mentioned Mazzoni), a tightly packed quarto of five hundred pages, *plus* an elaborate index. This is a sort of "Bysshe" *ante Bysshium*—a huge *gradus* of poetic tags from Virgil, Ovid, and Horace, arranged ready for anybody who wishes to pursue the art of poetry according to the principles of Vida. Here you may find choice of phrases to express

[1] His *Explanationes de Arte Poetica* (Rome, 1587) are simply notes on Horace.

[2] I have not yet been able to see L. Gambara, *De Perfecta Poeseos Ratione* (Rome, 1576), and I gather that Mr Spingarn was in the same case, as he refers not to the book, but to Baillet. According to that invaluable person (iii. 70), Gambara must have been an early champion of the uncompromisingly religious view of Poetry which appears in several French seventeenth-century writers, and in our own Dennis. The poet is not even to introduce a heathen divinity.

[3] Venice, 1592-93.

the ideas of "going to bed for the purpose of sleeping," of "black and beautiful eyes," of "shoes that hurt the feet," and of "horses that run rapidly." It was inevitable that this manual at once and *reductio ad absurdum* of the mechanic Art of Poetical Imitation should come—indeed, others had preceded Mazzone, for instance Fabricius, in Germany (see next Book). But one cannot help invoking a little woe on those by whom it came.

Summo.

The twelve *Discorsi*[1] of Faustino Summo manage to cover as many questions in their 93 leaves: the end of Poetry; the meaning of the word *philanthropia;*[2] the last words (the purgation clause) of the Definition of Tragedy; the possibility of a happy ending; the representation of atrocities and deaths; the admissibility of true fables; the necessity of unity of action; the propriety of drama in prose; *furor poeticus;* the sufficiency of verse to make poetry; the legitimacy of tragi-comedy and pastoral; and the quality of the *Pastor Fido.* Summo gives us our last word here with singular propriety. He is not quite Aristotelian to the point of infallibility, and his orthodoxy is what may be called a learned orthodoxy—that is to say, he is careful to quote comments or arguments of many of the writers whom we have mentioned in this chapter and the last, from Trissino to Denores, and of a few whom we have not. But in him this orthodoxy is in the main *constituted:* it is out of the stage of formation and struggle; and it is ready—all the more so that many of its documents have already passed with authority to other countries and languages—to take its place as the creed of Europe.

[1] Padua, 1600.

[2] Cf. Butcher, *op. cit.*, p. 297 and note.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CRITICISM OF THE *PLÉIADE*.

THE 'RHETORICS' OF THE TRANSITION—SIBILET—DU BELLAY—THE 'DÉFENSE ET ILLUSTRATION DE LA LANGUE FRANÇAISE'—ITS POSITIVE GOSPEL AND THE VALUE THEREOF—THE 'QUINTIL HORATIEN'—PELLETIER'S 'ART POÉTIQUE'—RONSARD: HIS GENERAL IMPORTANCE—THE 'ABRÉGÉ DE L'ART POÉTIQUE'—THE 'PREFACES TO THE FRANCIADE'—HIS CRITICAL GOSPEL—SOME MINORS—PIERRE DE LAUDUN—VAUQUELIN DE LA FRESNAYE—ANALYSIS OF HIS 'ART POÉTIQUE'—THE FIRST BOOK—THE SECOND—THE THIRD—HIS EXPOSITION OF 'PLÉIADE' CRITICISM—OUTLIERS: TORY, FAUCHET, ETC.—PASQUIER: THE 'RECHERCHES'—HIS KNOWLEDGE OF OLDER FRENCH LITERATURE, AND CRITICISM OF CONTEMPORARY FRENCH POETRY—MONTAIGNE: HIS REFERENCES TO LITERATURE—THE ESSAY 'ON BOOKS.'

THERE is, perhaps, no more remarkable proof of the extraordinarily germinal character of Italian literature than the influence which it exercised on France in the department with which we here deal. It is needless to say that the subsequent story of French literature has shown how deep and wide is the critical vein in the French literary spirit. But up to the middle of the sixteenth century this vein was almost absolutely *irrepertum*—whether *sic melius situm* or not. A few *Arts* of Poetry and Rhetoric had indeed been introduced across the Channel long before we had any on this side, as we should expect in a language so much more advanced than English, and as we have partly seen in the preceding volume. The *Art de dittier* of Eustache Deschamps, at the end of the fourteenth century, had been followed[1] through-

The Rhetorics *of the Transition.*

[1] See Petit de Julleville, ii. 392, who quotes four between *c.* 1405 and *c.* 1475; and for a monograph E. Langlois, *De Artibus Rhetoricæ Rythmicæ*, Paris,

out the fifteenth by others, some of them bearing the not uninteresting or unimportant title of "*Seconde Rhétorique*," as distinguishing Poetics from the Art of Oratory. The chief of these,[1] almost exactly a century later than the treatise of Deschamps, used to be assigned to Henri de Croy, and is now (very likely with no more reason) handed over to Molinet. But they were almost entirely, if not entirely, occupied with the intricacies of the "forms" of *ballade*, &c., and included no criticism properly so called.

The spirit and substance of these treatises seems to have been caught up and embodied, about the year 1500, in another Rhetoric,[2] which became very popular, and was known by such titles as the "Flower" or "Garden of Rhetoric," but the author of which is only known by one of those agreeably conceited *noms de guerre* so frequent at the time, as "'l'Infortuné.'" Its matter appeared, without much alteration or real extension, in the works of Pierre Fabri[3] and Gratien du Pont (1539),[4] and the

1890. To this may be added, as commentaries on this chapter, the corresponding division in Spingarn, *op. cit.*, Part II., pp. 172-250; the extensive and valuable Introduction to M. Georges Pellissier's edition of Vauquelin de la Fresnaye (Paris, 1885); and Herr Rücktaschel's *Einige Arts Poétiques aus der Zeit Ronsards und Malherbes* (Leipsic, 1889).

[1] *L'Art et Science de Rhétorique*, 1493, printed by Verard, and reprinted by Crapelet. Another, a little later, was printed about 1500, and reprinted in the Bibliothèque Elzévirienne, *Anciennes Poésies Françaises*, iii. 118. It is odd that M. Petit de Julleville, who does not give the volume and page of that very extensive collection, and misquotes its title, should speak of this as "in prose." It is in verse: divided under short headings, sometimes of teaching, sometimes of example, as in this notable "Rondel équivoqué," Avoir, Fait Avoir Avoir, Avoir Fait-Avoir, Fait, where each word is a line. The interpretation may be left as a treat for the reader.

[2] *L'Instructif de la seconde Rhétorique*, or *Le Jardin de Plaisance*.

[3] *Grant et vray art de pleine Rhétorique*, Rouen, 1521.

[4] *Rhétorique Métrifiée*, Paris, 1539. Between Fabri and Gratien du Pont appeared in 1529 Geoffroy Tory's *Champfleury*, a more grammatical than critical miscellany, which is elsewhere glanced at; and the very noteworthy critical remarks prefixed by Marot to his edition of Villon in 1533. M. Gaston Paris is assuredly right when he calls this (in his charming little book on the author of the *Ballade des Pendus*, Paris, 1901) "un des plus anciens morceaux de critique littéraire que l'on ait écrits en français," and its appreciative sympathy, if not coextensive with the merits of the work, leaves little to desire in the points which it touches. In fact, the mere selection of Villon and of the *Roman de la Rose*, as the subjects of his editorial care, shows in Master Clement the presence of a deep instinctive critical faculty, which has only partially and

actual birth of French criticism proper is postponed, by most if not all historians, till the fifth decade of the century, when Pelletier translated the *Ars Poetica* of Horace in 1545, while Sibilet wrote an original *Art Poétique* three years later, and just before Du Bellay's epoch-making *Défense.*

Sibilet.

There is little possibility of difference of opinion as to the striking critical moment presented to us by the juxtaposition, with but a single twelvemonth between, of Sibilet and Du Bellay. The importance of this movement is increased, not lessened, by the fact that Sibilet himself is by no means such a copyist of Gratien du Pont as Du Pont is of Fabri, and Fabri of the unknown "Unfortunate," and the "Unfortunate" of all his predecessors to Deschamps. He does repeat the lessons of the *Rhetorics* as to verse and rhyme, and so forth. He has no doubt about the excellence of that "equivocal" rhyme to which France yet clings, though it has always been unpleasing to an English ear. And (though with an indication that they are passing out of fashion) he admits the most labyrinthine intricacies of the ballade and its group.[1]

But he is far indeed from stopping here. He was (and small blame to him) a great admirer of Marot, and he had already learnt to distrust that outrageous "aureation" of French with Greek and Latin words which the *rhétoriqueurs* had begun, which the intermediate school of Scève and Heroet were continuing,[2] and which the *Pléiade,* though with an atoning touch

incidentally developed itself. In this, as in not a few other points, Marot himself seems to me to have had for the most part inadequate justice from critics; though here as elsewhere it may be allowed that time and circumstance prevented him from doing himself justice. His intense affection for literature and poetry, the light glancing quality of his wit and intellect, the absence of all pomposity, pedantry, and parade, and the shrewd sense which (in judgment if not quite in conduct) distinguished him, go very far to constitute the equipment of the accomplished critic. But his short life, perhaps a certain instability of character, and the immature condition of the special state of literature in his time, with the ever-deplorable distractions of the religious upheaval, gave him little chance.

[1] With the Lyons reprint (*v. infra*) of Sibilet and the *Quintil Horatien* is given an *Autre Art Poétique,* short and strictly practical. It notices Ronsard, but gives the old forms.

[2] It would be clearly improper to load this book with much general French literary history. But those who would thoroughly appreciate the position may find an endeavour to put it briefly in my *Short History* of the subject, Book II. chaps. i., ii., and iv.

of elegance and indeed of poetry, was to maintain and increase, in the very act of breaking with other *rhétoriqueur* traditions. He delights in Marot's own epigrams, and in the sonnets of Mellin de Saint-Gelais; and he is said to have anticipated Ronsard in the adoption of the term "ode" in French, though his odes are not in the least Pindaric (as for the matter of that Ronsard's are not). The epistle and the elegy give fresh intimation of his independent following of the classics, and he pays particular attention to the eclogue, dwells on the importance of the "version" (translation from Greek or Latin into French verse), and in the opening of his book is not very far from that half-Platonic, half anti-Platonic, deification of Poetry which is the catch-cry of the true Renaissance critic everywhere. There is not very much real, and probably still less intentional, innovation or revolt in Sibilet; and it is precisely this that makes him so valuable. Fabri and Gratien du Pont are merely of the old: in no important way do the form and pressure of the coming time set their mark on them. Du Bellay is wholly of the new: he is its champion and crusader, full of scorn for the old. Sibilet, between them, shows, uncontentiously, the amount of leaning towards sometimes revised or exotic novelty, and away from immediate and domestic antiquity, which influenced the generation.

Du Bellay.

The position of the *Défense et Illustration de la Langue Française* may be said to be in the main assured and uncontested, nor do I think it necessary to make such a curious dictum as that it is "not in any true sense a work of literary criticism at all" the subject of much counter-argument. In that case most undoubtedly the *De Vulgari Eloquio*, of which it has been not much less strangely held to be little more than a version adapted to the latitude of Paris, is not such a work either. I think it very likely that Du Bellay knew the *De Vulgari*, which Trissino had long before published in Italian; but both the circumstances and the purpose of the two books

(6th ed., Oxford, 1901). If they want more they had better go to MM. Darmesteter and Hatzfeld's admirable *Seizième Siècle* in France (Paris, 1878), or, best of all, to the last 150 pp. of the first vol. of Crepet's *Poètes Français*. M. Ch. d'Héricault's prefaces here, with his introduction to Marot (ed. Garnier), are not likely to be soon equalled.

seem to me as entirely different as their position in literary criticism seems to me absolutely secure.

Whether this be so or not, Du Bellay's circumstances are perfectly well known, and his purpose is sun-clear, alike before him and before his readers. He is justifying the vulgar tongue,[1] but he is justifying it as Ascham and his friends were doing in England; with the proviso that it shall be reformed upon, strengthened by, and altogether put to school to, the classical languages in the first place, with in the second (and here Ascham would *not* have agreed) Italian and even Spanish. His dealing is no doubt titularly and ostensibly directed to the language; but his anxieties are wholly concentrated on the language *as the organ of literature*—and specially of poetry. That he made a mistake in turning his back, with the scorn he shows, on the older language itself, and even on the verse-forms which had so long occupied it, is perfectly true. This is the besetting sin of the Renaissance—its special form of that general sin which, as we said at the outset, doth so easily beset every age. But his scheme for the improvement is far more original; and, except in so far as it may have been faintly suggested by a passage of Quintilian,[2] had not, so far as I know, been anticipated by any one in ancient or modern times. Unlike Sibilet, and unlike preceding writers generally, he did not believe so very much in translation — seeing justly that by it you get the matter, but nothing, or at least not much, more.[3] He did not believe in the mere "imitation" of the ancients either. I cannot but think that M. Brunetière[4] has been

The Défense et Illustration de la Langue Française.

[1] For a poet of such eminence and a book of such importance, Du Bellay and the *Défense* are curiously difficult of access. M. Marty-Laveaux' ed. of the Works, with the Pléiade generally (Paris, 1876), is very scarce and dear. M. Becq de Fouquières' *Selections* are, it is said, out of print, though they can be obtained. A Versailles reprint I know only through the British Museum Catalogue. It is odd how, in almost all languages, reprinting, like a more agreeable, if less troublesome, process, seems to "go by favour."

[2] That quoted *supra*, at i. 316.

[3] Of course in an earlier stage you *do* get much more. English, for instance, profited almost infinitely by translation from French and from Latin prose in the late fourteenth century, and throughout the fifteenth. But French was past this stage, or nearly past it, when Du Bellay wrote.

[4] *L'Evolution des genres* (Paris, 1890), p. 43 *sq.*

rather unjust in upbraiding Du Bellay with the use of this word. He does use it: but he explains it. He wishes the ancients to be imitated in their processes, not merely in their results. His is no Ciceronianism; no "Bembism"; none of that frank advice to "convey" which Vida had given before him, and to which, unluckily, his master Ronsard condescended later. "How," he asks, "did Greek and Latin become such great literary languages?" Were they always so? Not at all. It was due to culture, to care, to (in the case of Latin at least) ingenious grafting of fresh branches from Greek. So is French to graft from Greek, from Latin, from Italian, from Spanish even—so is the essence of the classics and the other tongues to be converted into the blood and nourishment of French.[1]

Its positive gospel and the value thereof.

Is this "not in any pure sense literary criticism at all"? Is this "young" and "pedantic" and "too much praised" by (of all Sauls among the prophets!) Désiré Nisard? I have a great respect for Mr Spingarn's erudition; I have a greater for M. Brunetière's masterly insight and grasp in criticism; but here I throw down the glove to both. That Du Bellay was absolutely wrong in his scorn for *ballade* and *rondeau* and other "*épiceries*" I am sure; that his master was right in looking at least as much to the old French lexicon as to new constructions or adoptions I am sure. But Du Bellay (half or all unawares, as is the wont of finders and founders) has seized a secret of criticism which is of the most precious, and which—with all politeness be it spoken—I venture to think that M. Brunetière himself rather acknowledges and trembles at, than really ignores. This free trade in language, in forms, in processes,—this resolute determination to convert all the treasures of antiquity and modernity alike into "food" for the literary organism, "blood" for the literary veins, marrow for the literary bones,—is no small thing. It

[1] M. Brunetière quotes this famous and striking expression, but complains that we are not told how it is to be done. Our English supplies a sufficient reply to this in famous words, "by reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting."

may not be the absolute and sole secret of literary greatness. But we can almost see that Greek, the most perfectly literary of all languages for a time, withered and dwindled because it did not pursue this course; that Latin followed it on too small a scale; above all, that English owes great part of its strength, and life, and splendid flourishing of centuries, to it. Du Bellay preached, perhaps more or less unconsciously, what Shakespeare practised—whether consciously or unconsciously we need neither know nor care, any more than in all probability he knew or cared himself.

No doubt all languages and all literatures have not the digestive strength required to swallow poison and food, bread and stones, almost indiscriminately, assimilating all the good, and dismissing most if not all of the evil. There are not, and never have been in England, wanting people, from the towering head of Swift down to quite creeping things of our own time, who have been distressed by "mob" and by "bamboozle," by "velleity" and by "meticulous." No doubt in France the objection has been still greater, and perhaps better founded on reason. But these propositions will not affect, in the slightest degree, the other proposition that Du Bellay, in the *Défense*, stumbled upon, and perhaps even half-consciously realised, that view of literature, and of language as the instrument of literature, which will have the whole to be mainly *un grand peut-être*—a vast and endless series of explorations in unknown seas, rather than a mathematical or chemical process of compounding definite formulas and prescriptions, so as to reach results antecedently certain. Very far would it have been from Nisard, who was no doubt bribed by the militant classicism of the Pléiade, to have given his praise had he thought this: I am even prepared to admit that Du Bellay himself would probably not have thanked me for the compliment of my theory. But hatred is often more sagacious than friendship. Malherbe and those about Malherbe knew perfectly well what the real spirit of the Pléiade was. And so does M. Brunetière, who has a scent as keen as that of Malherbe and those about Malherbe, and is very much better read, very much more scientifically equipped,

and quite infinitely better provided with intellectual and critical gift.[1]

It was unlikely, or rather impossible, that so revolutionary a challenge should lack its answer, which duly appeared a year later under the odd title of *Le Quintil Horatien.*[2] *The* Quintil Horatien. This used to be attributed to Charles Fontaine, a poet of parts; but it seems that he repudiated it, and it is now handed over to a pedagogue of the name of Aneau. It is a dogged little book, which treats the *Défense* very much as if it were an impertinent school exercise, and goes through it with the lead pencil in a fashion at once laborious, ineffectual, and suggestive of a vain desire to substitute the birch rod. The author, whoever he was, might have found plenty of things to say against Du Bellay, and he is on fairly solid ground when he indignantly protests that William of Lorris, Chartier, Villon, and others were not the artless clowns, or positive sinners, that this petulant-sparkling star of the Pléiade had looked awry upon. But even here his own ignorance of the still better things before the *Rose* disabled him: and it is by no means certain that he would have had the wit to appreciate them if he had known them. He thinks the sonnet too "easy," poor man! condemns the elegy on the absurd ground that it saddens the reader; and (committing the same fault in defence which more modern critics have committed in attack) bases his main, if not his whole, praise of *Ballade* and *Chant Royal*,

[1] The small space given to the *Défense* here may seem inconsistent with the importance assigned to it. The fact is, however,—and this fact no doubt explains to some extent, if it does not excuse, the views of those who do *not* think it very important,—that its details require little notice. Its claim lies in its eager eloquence, in the new position sketched above, and (negatively) in its onslaught on the forms of French poetry for two hundred years past. Du Bellay's critical views reappear in the "Epistle to the Reader" in his *Olive* (ed. Becq de Fouquières, pp. 67-76), in that prefixed to his *Vers Traduits* (ibid., pp. 151-157), in the vigorous defence of vernacular verse addressed to the second of the three Valois Marguerites (ibid., pp. 127-129), and elsewhere.

[2] Others call it *Le Quintil Censeur.* It appears not unnecessary to say that "Quintil" has not, and could not have, any reference to "Quintilian," but refers to the Quintilius of Horace (*Art. Po.*, 438). The original edition seems to be very rare: the British Museum only possesses the Lyons reprint (with Sibilet) of 1556. It seems to have been also reprinted with Du Bellay at Versailles in 1878, but this I do not possess. Some make the title *Horatian* or *Horace.*

Rondeau and *Rondel*, on their mere difficulty. But his most unfortunate, if not his most absurd, error was the line which, in common with most respectable persons, both then and since, he takes up against the *verbum inusitatum*, as shown in the new poetic diction of the *Pléiade*. This was doubly unlucky: first, because the fifteenth-century poets whom he champions had themselves "aureated" the language in or out of all conscience already; and secondly, because this kind of criticism, whether it be applied to Montaigne or Dryden, to Carlyle or Browning, is always a dangerous delusion. Very classical critics have pecked and mocked at the author of the *Quintil Horatien* because he black-marks not merely words useful or beautiful, like *sinueux*, *oblivieux*, *rasséréner*, but even such now sterling coin as *liquide* and *patrie*. It would be well if they, or those like them, would think twice before condemning, as neologisms, terms which may not impossibly seem as much matter of course to the twenty-fourth century as *patrie* does to the twentieth. But the author of the *Quintil* is really of that breed of carping critics which carps itself out of all common-sense. He makes ponderous fun of the initial signature I. D. B. A. ("J. du Bellay Angevin"); objects to the statement that "nature gave us *tongues* to speak," because Aristotle, Galen, and Petrus Hispanus agree that palate, throat, lips, and teeth are also necessary to the process; to the use of *voix* instead of *son*, where animals are not concerned. The sea would have no voice for him—and doubtless had none.

Pelletier's Art Poétique.

From such mere "denigration" (the censor permits himself this word as a stone to throw at Du Bellay) no good thing could come: and besides, for some generation or more, the brother stars were to fight in their courses for Pléiade criticism as well as for Pléiade poetry. The second *Ars Poetica* of the French Renaissance—the first in any full modern sense—appeared in 1555 from the hand of Jacques Pelletier, himself a spelling reformer, a professor, and, what is more, a mathematician; but a man of versatile ability and much eagerness to welcome any new good thing, with no small power of starting such things. He was a pleasant poet, full of Pléiade manner before the Pléiade had been

formed; nor can even his absurd spelling[1] quite hide the beauty of such things as

"Alors que la vermeille Aurore."

And when, at the age of nearly forty, he wrote his *Poetic*, nobody could charge him with being a mere theorist. He went heart and soul for the *Pléiade* ideas, and like Du Bellay and the rest, as indeed was unavoidable, busied himself first of all with the reform of the language. He recommends the formation of a regular poetic diction, and goes so far (I do not say that it is too far) as to approve of retaining double forms, one fully "frenchified," one simply Latin with a French termination (*e.g.*, *repousse* and *repulse*), the first for prosaic, the second for poetic use. The famous Pléiade stumbling-blocks, the compound epithet and the inverted order of words, are no stumbling-blocks for him—he takes them triumphantly in the stride of his revolutionary ardour: and he joins Ronsard also in the safer if not more popular recommendation of archaism, and of adoption of didactic forms at pleasure. No doubt he is not always wise: though the Classical school which followed had lost the right to reproach him with abusing the principle of suiting the sound to the sense. But still there is a great wisdom in him. Himself an excellent rhymer, he has some of the qualms about rhyme which were so frequent in the sixteenth century; but he is sound on the point (in French not admitting of any serious contest) that without rhyme poetry becomes prose, and he is more than lukewarm as to classical metres. It is sad but not surprising that he joins Du Bellay in condemning the delightful if not all-sufficing metrical kinds which had produced such charming things from Lescurel to Villon; and he duly recommends comedy, tragedy, and epic in their place. As he had himself translated the *Epistle to the Pisos* eleven years earlier, it is not wonderful that he sticks very close to it. Whether, as has been said by some, he does not know Aristotle, may not be quite certain; but it is certain that Aristotelian doctrines make no figure in him: it will be remembered that

[1] "Vermeille" with him is "vermeilhæ"; "voix," "voès"; "neigeux," "negeus"; Lucan, "Lukein," &c.

they had not made much even in Italy at this time. In fact, it seems reasonable to doubt whether, despite their adoration of Greek, the Pléiade writers ever drew much direct inspiration from the *Poetics*, though, in Italian translations and commentaries at least, it must have influenced them to some extent.

Ronsard: his general importance.

The most interesting figure of Pléiade criticism, however, is, as it should be, Ronsard[1] himself. The greatness of this really great poet must be injuriously affected, but ought not to be obscured to critical judgment, both by the fact (for which he is to blame) that he tried too many things and wrote too much; and by the other fact (for which he is blameless) that he attempted a new theory and practice of poetry, not, like his younger and more fortunate contemporary Spenser, at the beginning of a great poetic wave in his own country, but at a time when that country's energies were steadily settling towards prose. Yet he was nothing if not critical. The actual amount of critical expression that he has left us is not large: it is a pity that he did not devote to it some of the time which he might well have spared from his too copious, and sometimes too undistinguished, versemanship. He is, like Dryden (whom he resembles in not a few ways so much that I should be surprised if the parallel has not struck others), somewhat careless of outward consistency in his critical utterances — a carelessness indicative in each case of real critical sincerity, of the fact that the two poets were honestly seeking the way, and had the sense not to persevere in blind alleys when they found them blind. Above all, like the whole of his school, he is distinguished by a critical note, which must be dwelt on in the Interchapter succeeding this book, but which may well be indicated here—the note that they are much more bent on the production of new literature than on the study of old.

But, for all this, he is a remarkable critic, and in his critical

[1] *Œuvres Complètes*, ed. Blanchemain, 8 vols., Paris, 1857-1867. They are not quite "complete," but the omissions (which may be found, if anybody wants them, in such respectable works as the *Cabinet Satirique* &c.) fortunately do not concern *us*.

aperçus we can ourselves perceive germs, indications, suggestions, which might have resulted in the creation of a much larger body of actual criticism. Indeed these are (as M. Pellissier[1] and others have shown) actually responsible for much that is most characteristic, and for most of what is best, in the Classical school of the next century, which affected to despise him, as well as for other things which, if that school had followed them out, would have saved it from its most fatal mistakes and shortcomings.

The Abrégé de l'Art Poétique.

The main critical *loci* in Ronsard have been duly pointed out by his editor, M. Prosper Blanchemain. They are the formal *Abrégé de l'Art Poétique* of 1565; the prefatory matter to his not too well-starred epic, the *Franciade*, ten years later and onwards; and the remarkable *Caprice au Seigneur Simon Nicolas*—a poem written late, and not, it seems, published save posthumously. The "Abridgement"[2] answers to its name, for it only fills just twenty Elzevirian pages. It begins in a manner which shows (as so many other things do in Ronsard) the gaps which separated him from, as well as the ties which united him to, the usual thought of the Renaissance, and still more that of the seventeenth century. Although there are of course exceptions, the general drift of Italian criticism had been that poetry, like any other art or science, is a thing teachable and learnable. On no other ground could the "archæolatry," which we have found almost universal, be maintained for a moment. Now Ronsard, though he dwells again and again on the necessity of study, begins with an apology for writing an Art of Poetry at all. He has had, he says modestly, some experience and practice, and he will do his best to give his correspondent[3] the benefit thereof. But poesy is *plus mental que traditif*, which we may translate "more native to the mind than communicable to it." He accordingly converts (with an agreeable twist) the stock invocation to the Muses into a real prayer for this mental endowment, and with equal ingenuity freshens up the stale *clichés* about the divinity

[1] In ed. of Vauquelin (*sup. cit.*), xxviii. *sq.*

[2] *Ed. cit.*, vii. 317-337

[3] Alphonse Delbène, Abbé of Haute-Combe in Savoy.

of Ancient poets, and about the Muses refusing to lodge save in a virtuous and pious mind. Therefore, too, study of these former favourites of poetry is requisite. But from these generalities he plunges straight into extremely minute details. Greek, Latin, and French—it is probable that he does not mention Italian because his correspondent, Delbène, was of Italian extraction—are to be carefully studied as languages. The rules of French prosody—among which is here for the first time authoritatively included the alternation of masculine and feminine rhymes—are to be carefully observed, and *e* is to be always elided before a vowel. It is perhaps worth noting that Ronsard uses "cæsura" for "elision," a catachresis in which he had followers, and which even affected Dryden. Greek and Roman proper names are, where possible, to be frenchified in termination. "The old words of our romances" (this is of the first importance) are not to be ejected, but to be chosen with care and prudence. Terms of art and technical similes are to be sought out with extreme diligence, so as to supply life and nerve to the book. Dialect-words may be used at need; the example of the Greeks being invoked here—perhaps a little rashly. Invention, says Ronsard, is the working of the Imagination; but he seems still inclined to the old limitation of this word to the retailing of images, and reprobates more strongly than is perhaps necessary or desirable *ces inventions fantastiques et mélancholiques qui ne se rapportent non plus l'une à l'autre que les songes entrecoupés des frénétiques.* There is to be first of all (note the Frenchman) Order and Disposition in poetical devices.

This order and this disposition are to be secured by a happy nature in the first place, and by a careful study of good models in the second. Among these good models, "those who have illustrated our language in the last fifteen years" (*i.e.*, since the *Défense*) are to be counted in; and (this was added later) foreign modern languages are also to be carefully studied for the enriching of the mother tongue. "Elocution" is nothing else than "a propriety and splendour of words well chosen, and ornamented with grave and short sentences, which make verses shine, like as do precious stones, well mounted, the fingers of

some great seignior."[1] The vocabulary must be copious and composed of well-sifted words, with plentiful description and comparison, moulded specially on Homer. The common form of "great" poem-making follows, with reference to Aristotle as well as Horace, with caution against trite and otiose epithets, against epithet-strings *à l'Italienne*, but with a strong praise of the *mot propre*. Rhyme is treated rather briefly; and then Ronsard drops to minutiæ of *e*'s and *h*'s, discusses Alexandrines (which, in a later edition, he says he should have employed in the *Franciade* but for powerful command) and "common" (decasyllabic) verse, and others, passes to some grammatical and orthographical cautions, and ends with the promise, unluckily never fulfilled, of a longer *Poetic* some day.

The Prefaces to the Franciade.

It may have been in part payment of this promise that he wrote the Prefatory matter to the *Franciade*.[2] This, which, as it stands in the modern editions, is triform, consists of a short Preface (or *Au Lecteur*) in prose, from the master's own hand, to the original edition; of a verse exordium, or rather Introduction, separate from the poem proper; and, between the two, of a second Preface or *Treatise on Heroic Poetry* of some length, which we have, not as it left the author's pen, but arranged and revised (it is said under his direction) by Claude Binet. The critical interest of the verse Proem lies in the enthusiastic glorification of Homer and Virgil (who have shown the whole secret of epic-writing, and whose work the author bids his own "adore on its knees"), and in a spirited reissue of the cardinal doctrine of the *Pléiade* that French is a fertile soil, all overgrown and untilled, which must be brought under cultivation by the unsparing labour of poets and scholars.

The first Preface begins with the time-honoured comparison, or contrast, between History and Poetry, as dealing, the one with verity, the other with verisimilitude. Hence Ronsard strikes off to set Homer and Virgil far above all others, and to

[1] "Jewels five words long
That on the stretched forefinger of all time
Sparkle for ever."
—TENNYSON, *The Princess*.

[2] *Ed. cit.*, iii. 7-39.

fix a stigma on Ariosto as presenting a body handsome enough in members, but so counterfeit and monstrous as a whole that it is like an unwholesome dream. He has evidently on his mind the objections, perhaps of the ancients, perhaps of some Italians, to the combination of historical poetry, and endeavours to meet the objection that he comes nearer to actual history "than Virgilian art permits" by the rather perilous excuse that Virgil only lived under a *second* emperor, while he himself lives under the successor of a long line of kings, and that Charles our Lord and King insisted on no invidious preference being shown to some of his ancestors over the others. Indeed Ronsard is too typical a Frenchman for a sense of humour to be exactly his strong point.

He then proceeds to name, as his example, rather "the naïve facility of Homer than the curious diligence of Virgil": though he ventures to reprehend some excess of improbability in the scheme and details of the *Iliad*, and ends with some particulars of apology and explanation. The most curious of these are a passage giving reasons (by no means in strict accordance with the sentence referred to above) for rejecting the Alexandrine in favour of the decasyllable, and a pathetic appeal to the reader *not* to read his poem like an official document,[1] but to accommodate his voice to its passion, and especially to raise that voice whenever he comes to a mark of exclamation.

The second, later, longer, and, as we have said, not quite authentic, Preface, addressed to the *Lecteur Aprentif*, is a discourse on the Heroic Poem in general; and as such is responsible for the specimens of the kind with which the next century was troubled in France, if not for those from the *Henriade* downwards, which serve as even less cheerful ornaments to the French literature of the eighteenth. We have seen already how carefulness and trouble about this thing had been gathering and growing in Italy, and how it was, in Ronsard's own days, causing the storm about the *Gerusalemme*. The "Maronolatry" which France shared with Italy led to it directly; and even the championship

[1] *Plustost à la façon d'une missive, ou de quelques lettres royaux, que d'un poème bien prononcé.*

of Homer (as in Ronsard's own case) — the attempt to establish two kings of the Epic Brentford — was certain to conduce to it. Ronsard himself, however, does not at first attempt the general question; indeed it is hardly possible to draw attention too often to the far greater abstinence from general and deductive consideration which at this time characterises the French critics, as compared with the Italians. He begins with a fresh attack (not quite in the best faith, if his own later remarks be pressed, as perhaps they need not be) on the Alexandrine; and, by a deflection more natural in the original than it appears in a summary, goes off to a panegyric of periphrasis, which again was only too docilely received by his successors of all schools for the next two centuries in France. His examples are taken from Virgil— indeed the earlier part of this Preface, at any rate, is as enthusiastically Virgilian as Scaliger himself could desire. Then he puts stress once more on the significant epithet, lays down *obiter* the delightfully arbitrary dictum that, as the unity of drama is the revolution of a day, so the unity of at least a war-epic is the revolution of a year, dwells largely on his favourite distinction between the poet and the versifier, which he justifies (not too well) by insisting on artful variations of the narrative by speeches, dreams, prophecies, pictures,[1] auguries, fantastic visions, and appearances of gods and demons. All this time we have heard nothing of Homer, and indeed have read nearly half a score pages before his name occurs as furnishing Virgil with some of his facts and personages, just as he had drawn his own from older stories, "comme nous faisons des contes de Lancelot, de Tristan, de Gauvain, et d'Artus," a passage to be noted. The dozen or so which remain are oddly occupied by a sort of jumble of notes and hints to the epic poet, reminding one of that valuable paper of advice which Sir John Hawkins sent to Captain Amyas Leigh, on "all points from the mounting of ordnance to the use of vitriol and limmons against the scurvy." He must describe splendid palaces and grounds, trace heroes and heroines to gods and nymphs, dress them handsomely, wound them in

[1] *Principalement des boucliers.*

the right places,[1] not invent too much, allow himself *enjambement* and hiatus, use plentiful comparisons and terms of art, do things handsomely in general, boil his very kettles with a Homeric afflatus,[1] be thoroughly careful about study, but, above all, attend to diction, as to which the cautions and licences of the *Abrégé* are repeated in fuller form, with a special injunction not to Ciceronianise idly, but to *faire un lexicon des vieils mots d'Artus, de Lancelot, et de Gauvain.*

Ronsard will necessarily give us text for remark on the criticism of the Pléiade in the Interchapter following this Book.

His critical gospel.

But we must say a little of his critical attitude here. That it is of more interest than positive importance cannot easily be denied. Not only for our purpose, but for its own, it is injured by the very sincerity, practicalness, and common-sense of the writer's purpose and view. He clearly does not regard the past of French literature with quite such a petulant contempt as that of Pelletier and Du Bellay. But he is even more steadily and thoroughly convinced that something better can, should, and shall be done: and it is on the doing of this, by himself and others, that all his thoughts are fixed. He does not give himself the time—he does not, it is evident, think it in the least worth while—to take a critical survey of the past in any detail, or with any general grouping. It is enough for him that Homer and Virgil are of the greatest, and that their work is also of the greatest; and he wishes Frenchmen to go and do likewise. He almost, if not altogether, accepts the end as a datum; and is only troubled about the means. In regard to some of these means his doctrine, though somewhat *ondoyant* and even inconsistent, is surprisingly sound and original. If part of it was accepted with advantage by his countrymen in the centuries which followed, other parts were discarded and neglected, with an almost incalculably disastrous result. That "lexicon of the old words of *Lancelot* and *Artus*" would have saved French from the drab smug insignificance of its eighteenth-

[1] Odd as these things may seem, they are not fool-born jests of an idle historian. Ronsard actually says them, though at greater length. See p. 28, "*Si tu veux faire mourir sur-le-champ quelque capitaine, il le faut navrer au plus mortel lieu du corps, comme le cerveau, le cœur, la gorge,*" &c., &c.; and, p. 29, "*Car s'il fait bouillir de l'eau en un chaudron,*" &c., &c.

century garb; those cautions about *enjambement* and the like might almost have done for France what Spenser and Shakespeare did for England.

But this comparative independence in some points was—probably from the want of that real historical horizontality of view which, of all the sixteenth-century critics, Cinthio, Castelvetro, and Patrizzi alone seem in various degrees to have attained—accompanied by a singular servility and conventionality in others. "Why, O Prince of Poets!" one feels inclined to say, "with all reverence to your grey and laurelled head—why should we trouble ourselves about *peintures insérées contre le dos d'une muraille, et des harnois, et principalement des boucliers* because one very great poet found them useful to produce historical effects nearly three thousand years ago, and another much lesser poet chose to imitate him slavishly some thousand years later? Why should we do it, even supposing the two poets to be on a level? Very likely Homer's warriors *had* painted or graven bucklers. We have not. Arthur's knights had not—at least the paintings (assuming them to be armorial) were quite different. Why should we have the 'monstrous language of horses wounded to death'? Why this childish limitation in imitation? Handsome dresses are admirable things: but why must we be limited to lion-skins and panther-skins and bearskins for the material? If we have got to make a cauldron boil, let it double double, boil and bubble by all means: but suppose we *don't* want to boil it?" To all this we not only get no answer from Ronsard; but in his critical writing (not, as we have said, extensive nor always outwardly consistent, but thoroughly uniform in spirit) we find no trace of any such *aporia* ever having presented itself to his mind. *They* did these things and produced good effects: let *us* do them that we may produce good. It seems a "good old rule" enough: yet perhaps it is "a simple plan" also in more senses than one.

Good or bad, complete or incomplete, this criticism is the very soul of the *Pléiade*. Its playwrights, such as Grévin[1]

[1] In the Prefatory Discourse to his *Mort de César* (1562). He extols Aristotle and Horace, but does not like Seneca.

and Jean de la Taille,[1] followed Italian practice in prefixing argumentative discussions to their plays—reflecting on the mediæval drama, comparing, in modest or buoyant spirit, their own work to that of the ancients, and the like. A section of the school (as was almost unavoidable, despite the "No-Surrender" resistance which French as a language opposes to the proceeding) tried classical metres after the principles of Tolomei: and Jacques de la Taille, the brother of Jean, a poet and dramatist of fantastic but distinct ability, wrote a tractate[2] in defence of them. They made closer and closer approximations to the absolute Trinity of Unities: and though Du Bellay in his youthful fervour had committed himself to a not unwise antinomianism, they more and more showed themselves as the true ancestors of the neo-classic school, by framing and insisting on "rules." The great men of letters who were more or less unattached, but well-willing irregulars of the school, such as Pasquier and Montaigne, bestow, in their different ways, increasing attention on literary criticism and literary history. And, just before and after the junction of the centuries, when the *Pléiade* proper had set, and its influence was about to wane before the narrow and arbitrary classicism of Malherbe on the one hand, and the rococo-picaresque of the Spanish school on the other, there appeared two formal *Arts of Poetry*, the one the complete and final code of Pléiade Poetic, the other a rather hybrid and nondescript product, chequering Ronsardism with a good deal of Italian matter.

Some minors.

This last,[3] the earlier to appear, in 1598, had for author Pierre de Laudun, sometimes spoken of, from a seignory of his, as de Laudun d'Aigaliers. It is in prose, and its author, who is roundly described by Herr Rücktaschel as a "copyist of the purest water," diversifies his borrowings from Sibilet, Ronsard, and Pelletier on the one hand, from Scaliger

Pierre de Laudun.

[1] In the prefatory matter of his *Saül le Furieux*, 1572. Jean assails the native drama, especially the Moralities, and thinks highly of Seneca.

[2] *La Manière de faire des vers en Français comme en Grec et en Latin*, Paris, 1573. There is a useful abstract of this in Rücktaschel, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-27.

[3] *L'art Poétique Français*, Paris, 1598. This, like almost all the works noticed in this chapter, is but a little book, odd to compare with the close-packed Italian quartos. But it is longer than most of its fellows.

and "Vituperani" on the other, with plentiful examples from his own work; for he had followed one greater man with a *Franciade* and ante-dated another with a *Horace*. I cannot enter any strong protest against the hard words (not confined to those already quoted) which his German critic bestows on him.[1] His real interest is purely that of symptom and tendency, in which respect he shows a rather odd but not uninstructive mixture. On one side he rejects the Ronsardising coinage of words and adoption of dialect forms, with other Pléiade traits. On another he shows himself recalcitrant to the coming classicastry by declaring that "we are not bound by their laws"—*e.g.*, in regard to the number of acts. On a third we find him emphasising this attitude into an absolute refusal of the Unity of Time, against which he says almost all the obvious and sensible things, in a fashion to some extent redeeming what is on the whole the work of a not very intelligent bookmaker.

Vauquelin de la Fresnaye.

Vauquelin de la Fresnaye has not this sudden cry of the voice in the desert: but his *Art Poétique* is, as a whole, a book of infinitely greater interest and value than Laudun's. Vauquelin was a gentleman and lawyer of Normandy, who, born at the *château* whence he took his name, near Falaise, fought, amused himself, loved the country and its sports, became President at Caen, and wrote verses of no small merit in various kinds. His *Art Poétique* was more than thirty years on the stocks: and having had its keel laid in 1574, when the *Pléiade*, though a quarter of a century old, was still in full flourishing, did not get launched till 1605, when a new age had begun in more than chronological fashion. It is a composition of considerable bulk, consisting of three books, each running to rather under twelve hundred lines. Either of deliberation, or as a result of intermittent attention during the time in which it was a-preparing, Vauquelin arranged it (or failed to arrange it) in most admired disorder. The precisians of the next age would have been horrified at the promiscuous character of its observations; and some would have been grate-

[1] Some abatement, however, may be claimed, if only on the ground that Laudun is absolutely sound on the vernacular question.

ful to its latest editor[1] if, in addition to, or instead of, part of the elaborate and very valuable *apparatus criticus* of various kinds which he has given, he had prefixed an argument. As it is, we must make one: for the book, if not one of our very greatest *points de repère*, is yet such a point.

Analysis of his Art Poétique.

After a prose address to the Reader, containing a rather touching reference to the flight of time and the change of public opinion since he had begun his work, to the cares of life, and the troubles of the realm, and the death of old friends—he begins with the proper invocation. Immediately after he gives, as has been justly observed, a warning note by an elaborate simile-description of Poesy as an ordered garden, with beds and paths and hedges, wherein if any rude boy should trample on the beds, desert the paths, and break down the espaliers, the gardener would assuredly make injurious observations to him, and drive him out—the Gardener being further identified as no less a person than the Divinity. This comparison would of itself show that Vauquelin aims at no arrogant originality; but he is yet more explicit. His four guides are *le fils de Nicomache* (Aristotle, of course; but note how Ronsard's fatal counsel of periphrasis has already sunk, never to be quite extracted, into the French mind!), the "harper of Calabria" (Horace), Vida, and Minturno.[2] But he hardly apologises for writing in French. Then, borrowing from Cleanthes, through Seneca, the old comparison of verse to "a trumpet which adds power to the voice," he passes *non sine Dis*—with abundant indulgence in mythology—to the exaltation of Number and Harmony at large, and to theorising in the Imitation of Nature. He holds high the banner of the Ronsardian unification of Arts; and while

[1] M. Pellissier, to whose already cited edition the references following are made.

[2] I agree with Mr Spingarn (p. 187) and disagree with M. Pellissier (p. xxxviii) in thinking that this reference to Minturno is quite serious. The French editor, indeed, speaks of Minturno rather oddly, coupling him with Vida as "les deux *poètes* Italiens," and saying that both "ne font que remâcher les préceptes des anciens," which Vauquelin only says of Vida. This is of more than doubtful justice as to Minturno, and why call him a "poet"? He may have written in verse on other occasions, for aught I know, but his two *Poetics* are as unquestionably in prose as Vida's one is in verse.

insisting that even the ugly may be made interesting, if not beautiful, in the imitation of it, repeats the old cautions about inconsistent and too fantastic admixture of imagery. Among other followings of Ronsard we note the earnest advice to cultivate stately descriptions and abundant ornament. But he does not omit—though it must be allowed he does not observe it over strictly himself—the caution to keep the thread,

"Si tu fais un Sonnet, ou si tu fais une Ode."

The praise of order and consistency gives place to remarks on diction which repeat the Ronsardist canons and cautions, and to a fashionable contempt (to be taken up later, as so much else was, by the thankless Neo-Classics) of Anagrams and Acrostics. The usual twinning of Homer and Virgil is succeeded by reference to some other classics: and for a time Vauquelin seems to be confining himself (in so far as his expatiatory manner ever admits confinement) to the *ouvrage héroique*, whence he turns to other kinds, and the verse-forms suitable for them. He repeats Du Bellay's curse on *ballade* and *rondeau*,[1] and passes like him to a special eulogy of the Sonnet, in which (as Du Bellay was not able to do) he is able now to produce a stately list of French practitioners. This part of the Book, a little after its middle, is full of literary history and allusion, the latter touching foreign languages and literatures as well as French. And the rest of it is occupied with a fresh and rather disorderly account of styles and kinds, with the verse and diction proper to each, ending up with a curious amplification of Quintilian's story[2] about Apelles and Antigonus, the moral of which seems to be a sort of *Medio tutissimus ibis.*

The First Book.

The Second Book also has its due invocations to the Muses and the King: and Vauquelin divagates, in his amiable way, for some hundred lines before he settles down to paraphrase Horace's warning about the *scriptor cyclicus*, and to give, as examples of exordium, not merely a

The Second.

[1] *Oste moy la Ballade, oste moy le Rondeau.*

[2] *Inst. Orat.*, II. xiii. 13. The anecdote in Quintilian is very simple: Apelles paints Antigonus in profile to hide a lost eye. Vauquelin (on uncertain authority) expands this into a long story of a competition between Polygnotus, Scopas, and Diocles.

refashioning in Alexandrines of the opening of Ronsard's *Franciade*, but a long extract from his own projected epic of the *Israëlide*. But as soon as he has done this (to the extent, it is true, of some fifty lines) he affects shame at quoting himself, and bids the poet swim in the Greek and Latin sea, especially in Virgil. In fact, Vauquelin is much more of a Virgil-worshipper than Ronsard, and almost as much as Vida, if not as Scaliger; and it is curious to see in his work that unconquerable, and as it were magnetic, repulsion from the greater poetry of Homer, and attraction towards the lesser verse of Virgil, which more and more shows itself, from the start of the Renaissance to the finish of the eighteenth century. Although he again and again diverges to the prose Epic (with the usual example of Heliodorus and the *Æthiopica*), to the artificial epic unity of a year (which he doubtless took, after Ronsard, from Minturno), and so forth, he as constantly returns to Virgil, describing him in one place plumply as "second to Homer in age, but first in rank."

Then he reverts to his Horace, and, not forgetting a hint to the poet (one frequent with him) that he had better take French and Christian subjects such as the crusade of St Louis, he dilutes largely the famous clauses of his model on keeping the type of age and youth, &c. This leads him naturally to the subject of drama, on which he is, of course, severely Horatian; especially in regard to messengers and the avoidance of awkward things on the stage. He has the *Pléiade* drama, too, before him as he writes; extols the Chorus, and again does not forget his hints of Christian subjects. But in the sequel he leaves his ancient authorities, and their severer tastes, rather on one side, in order to dwell at great length on the accessories of the stage—music, *mise-en-scène*, &c., with a not uninteresting reference—like that of Sibilet (*v. supra*) earlier, and possibly due to it—to the moralities of *nos vieux François*, as well as a welcome to the Ballet and to his native *Vaux-de-Vire*. He indulges in a warm eulogy of French as a language passing all the vulgars of Europe, and of French poetry, and then handles Satire, a subject in which he was an expert, and which he had treated in a prose *Discourse*, joined to his own

exercises in the kind. He connects it with the Provençal *Sirvente*, allows the *coq-à-l'âne* a sort of poor-relationship, and dwells on French lyric poets at some length, once more commending Latin models and (in a deflection, more logical than some of his, to the subject of iambic and other metre) noticing the recent attempts at a quantified prosody. On this subject he prudently declines to commit himself: posterity must decide. And the rest of the Book again busies itself with various styles and kinds, the measures proper to them, and the authors, modern as well as ancient, who have treated them best.

These lucubrations, however, disorderly as they may seem, contain numerous things of interest—a just remark on rhyme as practically the equivalent of stricter metrical arrangement; observations on the prose *Lancelot*, &c., showing that Vauquelin was not destitute of that knowledge of the older literature of his country which distinguished France and Frenchmen rather creditably in the Renaissance, and to which we shall presently return. Divers contemporary authors are also mentioned, Garnier being singled out for special (and well deserved) praise; and there is a pleasant reminiscence of the time when

> Nous passions dans Poitiers l'Avril de notre vie,

and, instead of attending to the study of the law, followed the frolics of the Muses. The actual close of the Second Book is a neither undignified nor ill-felt wail over the sufferings of France in the religious wars, and an expression of confidence in the King's powers of healing.

The Third.

The Third Book, after the usual decorative beginnings, returns to Drama, and takes up Comedy, with praise for Grévin and Belleau, and a long discussion of the nature and varieties of the kind, including Tragi-comedy, in which, naturally, the *Bradamante* of Garnier, the only considerable example, is taken for study. Next a turn, half abrupt, is made to Pastoral; and then Vauquelin returns to his favourite Satire and to other forms, taking his texts from Horace, Vida, and his own fancy, in a slightly bewildering

manner, but to some extent carrying off the *à propos de bottes* of his argument by his serene indifference to it, and the total absence of any awkward apologies or attempts to join. By degrees he settles, or seems to be settling, to the general questions (What is the end of poetry? Instruction or Pleasure? and the like), but turns from them to a long catalogue of the poets of his time.

The foot-by-foot following of Horace, which is more noticeable than ever in the last three or four hundred lines—with the licence of going off at any tangent from Horatian texts which Vauquelin also permits himself—would account for any amount of the desultoriness which is only disguised (if, indeed, it can be said to be disguised) from the most careless, in Horace himself, by the brevity of his scale and the brilliancy of his phrase. But we do not, of course, go to Vauquelin for an orderly treatise; we go to him that he may tell us what an interesting and remarkable division of French men of letters knew of criticism and thought of literature.

His exposition of Pléiade *criticism.*

His answer is not the less, but the more, valuable because of its apparent incoherence, this incoherence being itself a piece of evidence in the case. The *Pléiade*, as we have said more than once, was eagerly critical; but it had a strictly practical object, its criticism being entirely subsidiary and preliminary to the desire of creation. We meet here with nothing of the rather fatally "disinterested" investigation of the Italians. Even the ancients are studied less with a view to appreciating their beauties than with the desire to steal their thunder.

The precepts of Vauquelin's four guides—of Horace first and most of all, of Aristotle occasionally, of Vida pretty often, and of Minturno *nonnunquam*, are all adjusted to this end. Incidentally, of course, Vauquelin shows us some general critical views—the canonisation of Virgil, the adherence to the classical Senecan drama, the discouragement of mediæval forms, if not entirely of mediæval subjects and language. But, directly, he is the technical instructor, not the theoretical critic. His *technique*, with some slight alterations, is almost purely that of Ronsard, and displays the same admixture of the classical tendency

which the seventeenth century took up and hardened, with a quasi-romantic breadth and licence which that century rejected. It is easy to say, and not very difficult to see, that it might—that it actually did—result in a practice too promiscuous at worst, at best a little too eclectic—that French was not ready in point of time, and perhaps not quite suited in point of temperament, for the bridle to be flung too freely on the neck of Pegasus; and that Vauquelin is almost directly responsible for inciting the growth of the weeds at which his successor Boileau slashed with such a desperate hook sixty years later. It is even possible to say, on the other side, that Du Bellay's questioning of rules altogether was, from the Romantic point of view, sounder than Vauquelin's provision of what may be called conditional licences. We ought, however, to look at the *Art Poétique* rather in the light of what had gone before its long-delayed appearance than of what followed—at the production of 1559-1600, not at that of 1600-1660. It is in effect an *a posteriori* rationalising and methodising of *Pléiade* Poetry. This poetry is even now not much known in England, and its defects—inequality, heaviness at times, pedantry, a strange and almost irritating inability to get the wings quite free save at rare moments—are undeniable. But there is something, in the *Art* itself, of the better qualities of its subjects: and to those who give themselves the trouble to make their acquaintance, these subjects have a strange and a peculiar charm, in their mixture of gravity and grace, of love and lore, of paganism and piety, yea, of Classic and Romantic themselves. The *hedone* of the *Pléiade* is *alethes* as well as *oikeia*, and in this handbook of the school Vauquelin has revealed at least some of its secrets. Those who can do this are no contemptible, and no common, critics.

Outliers: Tory, Fauchet, &c.

But though Vauquelin thus sums up, in spirit as in time, the formal criticism of the *Pléiade*, we have not yet quite done with this. It has been, throughout, the practice of this book to take into consideration not only such formal expressions, but also those of men who, outside formal rhetoric or deliberate criticism, represent the literary taste of their time. The latter part of the French sixteenth century is

not poor in such. On the contrary, the interest in literature of this kind which it displays perhaps exceeds that shown in any country of Europe. Even Italy, despite its immensely greater volume of formal literary discussion and academic literary history, falls short in a certain intelligent independence of consideration. We might draw on works of many kinds, from the eccentric and mainly grammatical or typographical but extremely interesting *Champfleury* of Geoffroy Tory (which, as is well known, contains the original of Rabelais' Limousin scholar) as early as 1529; we might without too great straining bring in Master Francis himself, and we cannot justly neglect the name of Claude Fauchet, who almost deserves that of Premier historian of literature in Europe. But, obeying that system of representative treatment, especially in the outlying departments, of the subject, the necessity of which grows more urgent at every chapter and almost every page of this book, we may chiefly deal with two writers, the one almost as much of an antiquary and historian as Fauchet, but of greater literary faculty and a pleasanter style; the other one of the great names of the world's letters, and, in his own fitful fashion, referring to literature itself frequently and importantly enough. To those who know anything of the time this last sentence will have already named, without naming, Etienne Pasquier and Michel de Montaigne.

Pasquier: The Recherches.

The chapters of Pasquier's[1] *Recherches de la France*, in which he deals with French literature, are perhaps the most interesting of the whole. He had himself been an ardent disciple of the *Pléiade*, and a pleasant poet, in his youth; and in his maturer years he applied to the history of literature the same untiring research and sound good sense which made him the first historical inquirer, as distinguished from mere chroniclers, in France. It is not entirely unimportant that, in his preliminary remarks on the subject, he announces his intention of devoting his seventh book to French

[1] The *Recherches* have not been completely reprinted, I think, since 1723. All their literary matter, however, is included in M. Léon Feugère's extremely useful and well-edited *Œuvres Choisies d'E. P.* (2 vols., Paris, 1849). It extends from i. 230 to ii. 134, what follows on the University of Paris being itself not quite irrelevant.

Poetry and his eighth to French language—a pointed if unintentional expression of the predominance of poetry in literature even as late as the end of the sixteenth century. His first observations are directed to the difference between French and other modern languages on the one hand, and ancient poetry on the other, in the matter of rhyme, which he would derive (not without at least as much justification of probability and history as other theorists can allege) from the rhythmical parallelisms of prose speech, at first accidentally sweetened by homœoteleuton, and then deliberately by rhyme itself. He is well aware that the language of the Franks must have been German; and his theory of French as composed of three languages, Walloon (by which he probably means Gallic or Celtic), Latin, and Frankish, will be more obnoxious to philological pedants than to philosophical philologists. He knows the monorhymed *chansons* such as *Berte aux grans Piés*, but is disposed to put them unnecessarily late—nay, he seems to think that there was little before the thirteenth century and Philip Augustus. Yet he is not unaware of the much greater antiquity of the decasyllable as compared with the Alexandrine.

His knowledge of older French literature,

Indeed Pasquier has a not inconsiderable knowledge of mediæval poetry—a knowledge at any rate extending far beyond that of the *Pléiade* generally, who were as a rule content to recognise, with a certain toleration, the *Roman de la Rose*. He knows and praises Helinand, the authors of the great *Alixandre*, Thibaut de Champagne, Chrestien de Troyes, Raoul de Houdenc—not merely, it would seem, from Fauchet's book, but in themselves; and he quotes *Ogier le Danois*, *Athis et Prophilias*, *Cléomadès*, &c. Like a sensible man, he has that indispensable chapter on Provençal literature which some would cast out of French literary history, thereby making it unintelligible. And then he passes to the prose Arthurian romances, and to the formal poetry of the fourteenth century, of which he speaks without any of the exaggerated and slightly unintelligent—certainly intolerant—contempt of Du Bellay and Vauquelin. "*Servitude, que je ne die gêne d'esprit, admirable*," "*ces mignardises*" are his mild censures of them,

and he gives particular attention to Froissart and Alain Chartier, with mention of Villon and others, and a very high eulogium of *Pathelin*. He does not, he says, know the author (nor do we), but he will dare to say that this farce, as a whole and in parts, *fait contrecarre* to the comedies of both Greeks and Romans. He is fairly copious on the men of letters of the first half of the century, and then begins a new chapter with the picturesque and often-quoted phrase about the "great fleet of poets" that the reign of Henri II. brought forth, and their new style of poetry.

and criticism of contemporary French poetry.

He gives to Maurice Scève the honour of captaining the leading ship of this fleet; and then follow all the well-known names (and some not so well known) of the school proper, the catalogue being capped by some extremely interesting and valuable critical-anecdotic remarks on the greater writers, especially Ronsard himself. One could hardly be more just on this difficult[1] poet than is Pasquier, who allows him not merely grandeur but sweetness to almost any extent, "quand il a voulu *doux couler*"; calls him *grand poète entre poètes*, but admits that he was "très mauvais censeur et aristarque de ses livres." Then he partly returns upon his steps in another chapter, where he approaches French poetry from a different side, considering especially its verse-structure, with examples from Marot downwards, and dwelling on the alternation of masculine and feminine rhymes which Ronsard had sanctioned. On this matter the historical equity of Pasquier is especially noticeable, as opposed to the somewhat excessive correctness (according to pedagogic ideas of the correct) shown by most Frenchmen. He declines to take a side between "this new diligence and the old nonchalance." And he makes the very acute observation that Marot only allowed himself this nonchalance in verse *which was not to be sung*—a proof, as he remarks, that though Master Clement might not be Ronsard's equal in learning, he had a *facilité d'esprit admirable*. In yet another passage he compares French with Italian poetry, and, emboldened by this, with Latin itself; taking the patriotic side with equal courage and ingenuity, and ending with the

[1] Difficult, that is, to appraise critically—not to understand.

citation of some of his own Latin verses on Ronsard, and with the sigh, "De toute cette grande compagnie qui mit la main à la plume sous Henri II. il restait quatre, Théodore de Bèze, Ponthus de Thyard, Louis le Caron, et moi." Then, after a short appendix-chapter on classical metres in French (which he would like to approve, but seems in two minds about), he passes to language, on his treatment of which we cannot dwell. But he never allows himself to stray far from literature, and makes a pretext for returning at some length to his beloved *Pathelin*.

It may be observed that Pasquier, though interested in letters to an extreme degree, enjoys more than he judges—not perhaps the worst defect of the critic.

Montaigne: his references to literature.

The agile and penetrating intelligence of Montaigne could hardly have failed in any age to devote itself to literature; in his own age this devotion was especially inevitable. That his dealings with the subject are dealings in the height of his own fashion, it is unnecessary to say. Not many things could be more characteristic than the Essay on Pedantry (I. 24), in which the whole spirit and motive, not merely of the *Pléiade*, but of the sixteenth century generally, are subjected to the irregular glancing criticism of the essayist. This single paper would enable one to understand the fling of a man like Ben Jonson—the reverse of unintelligent, the reverse of unhumorous, but full of erudition, and of sixteenth-century reverence for it—at "All the essayists, even their master Montaigne." On the general question whether what is commonly called pedantry is a good or a bad thing, Montaigne's verdict comes simply to a "Mass! I cannot tell!" He bestows hearty praise on Du Bellay, a non-pedantic and courtier-like man of letters, who yet was enthusiastic for learning; heartier on Adrian Turnebus, a pedant in the common injurious sense; and in the middle of his essay he plays on study of Greek and Latin, on quotations from Plato and Cicero, on "arming oneself against the fear of death, at the cost and charges of Seneca."[1] The much longer

[1] Vol. i. p. 165, ed. Courbet and Royer. *Je n'aime point cette suffisance relative et mendiée*, he goes on with his own absolute and unborrowed stamp of phrase and epithet.

chapter on Education, addressed to Diane de Foix, which immediately follows, contains one of the worst expressions of Renaissance contempt of mediæval literature, in the boast that "of the Lancelots of the Lake, the Amadis, the Huons of Bordeaux, with which childhood amuses itself," he did not know so much as the name. "My Lord Michael" is great, but even he might have been greater if he *had* known them.

Indeed hardly anywhere does Montaigne exhibit his own undulation and diversity more fully than in relation to letters —at one time amassing ancient instances as if he were totally oblivious of the remarks above about Plato and Seneca; at another criticising for himself[1] with inimitable freshness and gusto; and at another again informing the scholar, with much coolness, that if he will take off hood and gown, drop Latin, and not deafen men's ears with unmitigated Aristotle, he will be at the level of all the world, and perhaps below it.

Even this, it will be seen, is not so very far from the cardinal *Pléiade* principle, that study of the ancients is an excellent thing, but that its chief value is to equip and strengthen the student for practice in French. And Montaigne, like the rest of his contemporaries and compatriots, always had this "cultivation of the garden" before him.. It is well known how the real pedants of his own time objected to his neologisms, just as Fontaine (or whoever was the author of the *Quintil*) did to those of Du Bellay; and how large a part these neologisms played in the development and nourishing of French prose. Every one who knows anything of Montaigne knows his enthusiastic eulogy of Amyot, and of the services which that *grant translateur* had rendered to French. And everybody should know the delicate and subtle appreciation which he lavishes, in a fashion so different from the indiscriminate laudations of Scaliger, on favourite passages of the ancients, more particularly[2] on the Venus and Vulcan passage of Virgil, and the Venus and Mars passage of Lucretius.

[1] Cf., for instance, the remarkable critical comparison of Tacitus and Seneca in the Eighth Essay of the Third Book, towards the close (iv. 37 *ed. cit.*)

[2] If there is anywhere a happier critical phrase, in its particular kind, than "cette noble *circumfusa*, mère du gentil *infusus*," I do not know it.

Of course Montaigne's interests, despite his exquisite literary accomplishment, are not primarily literary. But he has given one entire Essay (II. 10), and that not of the shortest, to Books; and he has frequent glancings at the subject, sometimes characteristically racy, as that at the *Heptameron*, "un gentil livre *pour son estoffe*." The "Books" essay begins with one of his familiar jactations of imperfection. He has some reading, but no faculty of retention. He often intentionally plagiarises — for instance from Plutarch and Seneca. He does not seek in books anything more than amusement and knowledge of himself and of life. He refuses to grapple—at any great expense of labour—with difficulties. He likes Rabelais, Boccaccio, and Johannes Secundus for mere pastime, but repeats his depressing scorn for romances, and confesses, as did Darwin on the score of Shakespeare, that he cannot take the pleasure he used to take in Ariosto and Ovid. He thinks Virgil, Lucretius, Horace, and Catullus (especially Virgil in the *Georgics* and the Fifth *Æneid*) at the top of poetry —a grouping which makes us long to pin the elusive Perigourdin down, and force him, Proteus as he is, to give us his exquisite reasons. His judgment on Lucan is a little commonplace, "not the style but the sentiments"—whereas the sentiments of Lucan are but Roman "common form," and his style, if not of the best kind, is great in a kind not the best. He thinks Terence "the very darling and grace of Latin," and is half apologetic as to the equalling of Lucretius to Virgil, positively violent (it is, he thinks, *bestise et stupidité barbarique*)[1] on that of Virgil to Ariosto, and depressing again in regard to Plautus (Terence *sent bien mieux son gentilhomme*). He returns again and again to the style of Terence; and warns us of the coming classicism by his objections to the "fantastiques élévations Espagnoles et Pétrarchistes," being equally "correct" in exalting (or at least in his reasons for the exaltation, there being no doubt about the fact) of Catullus above Martial. On Greek authors as such he frankly and repeatedly declares his incompetence to give judgment; but "now that Plutarch has

The Essay On Books.

[1] *Ed. cit.*, ii. 112. Most of the expressions quoted are in the immediate context.

been made French," he can as frankly yoke him once more with Seneca, and extol the pair *super æthera*, boldly expressing his comparative distaste for Cicero. He would like to have "a dozen of [Diogenes] Laertius," for the "human document," of course; and puts Cæsar above all other historians, including Sallust, while he has something to say of divers French writers of the class—Froissart (who, he thinks, gives "the crude matter of history"), Comines, Du Bellay-Langey, and others. It is to be noted that in this place he says nothing about French poetry. And when he does take up the subject much later, in II. 17, at the end of the "Essay on Presumption," he is very brief, only saying that he thinks Ronsard and Du Bellay "hardly far from the ancient perfection." At the beginning of II. 36 he divides with the majority on the merits of Homer and Virgil, though he once more admits a disqualification, which in this case is, of course, total. And in the famous remark,[1] "Poetry is an amusement proper for women; it is a frolic and subtle art, disguised, talkative, quite occupied with pleasure and display, like them," he gives no doubt a certain measure of his critical capacity in less specially conditioned matters.

This capacity is, indeed, strictly limited. Montaigne is almost, if not quite, as much set as his beloved Plutarch on the *life*-side of literature, as the only one that really interests him; and, in addition, he has an obstinate prosaic inclination, with which Plutarch does not seem to be nearly so chargeable. Yet he must have found mention here, not merely as our first very great French man of letters,[2] who has left us literary opinions, but as the very light and glory of the French intellect at the meeting of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and as thus giving an index of the greatest value to its tastes and opinions. He displays (conditioning it in the ways just men-

[1] III. 3, *Les Trois Commerces, ed. cit.*, iii. 288.

[2] Rabelais is no real exception. It is needless to say that *Gargantua and Pantagruel* do contain matter touching on literature. But Rabelais comes too early to be critical. The "Library of Saint-Victor" and other things are simply alarums and excursions of his general campaign against the rearguard of "monkish ignorance"; and in his references to French poetry he does not seem to have got beyond—or to have wished to get beyond—complacent acquiescence in *rhétoriqueur* pedantry.

tioned, and others, by his intense idiosyncrasy) the general literary attitude of the time—an active, practical, striving towards performance, a rather conventional and arbitrary admiration of the farther past, a contempt, or at least good-natured underestimation, of the nearer, and fair, if vague, hopes for the future. But considering the intensely critical character of Montaigne's intellect in most directions, its exertions in this direction tell us even more by what they do not, than by what they do.

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CHAPTER V.

ELIZABETHAN CRITICISM.

BACKWARDNESS OF ENGLISH CRITICISM NOT IMPLYING INFERIORITY—ITS CAUSE—THE INFLUENCE OF RHETORIC AND OTHER MATTERS—HAWES—THE FIRST TUDOR CRITICS—WILSON: HIS 'ART OF RHETORIC'; HIS ATTACK ON "INKHORN TERMS"—HIS DEALING WITH FIGURES—CHEKE: HIS RESOLUTE ANGLICISM AND ANTI-PRECIOSITY—HIS CRITICISM OF SALLUST—ASCHAM—HIS PATRIOTISM—HIS HORROR OF ROMANCE, AND OF THE 'MORTE D'ARTHUR'—HIS GENERAL CRITICAL ATTITUDE TO PROSE, AND TO POETRY—THE CRAZE FOR CLASSICAL METRES—SPECIAL WANTS OF ENGLISH PROSODY—ITS KINDS: (1) CHAUCERIAN—(2) ALLITERATIVE—(3) ITALIANATED—DEFICIENCIES OF ALL THREE—THE TEMPTATIONS OF CRITICISM IN THIS RESPECT—ITS ADVENTURERS: ASCHAM HIMSELF—WATSON AND DRANT—GASCOIGNE—HIS 'NOTES OF INSTRUCTION'—THEIR CAPITAL VALUE—SPENSER AND HARVEY—THE PURITAN ATTACK ON POETRY—GOSSON—'THE SCHOOL OF ABUSE'—LODGE'S 'REPLY'—SIDNEY'S 'APOLOGY FOR POETRY'—ABSTRACT OF IT—ITS MINOR SHORTCOMINGS AND MAJOR HERESIES—THE EXCUSES OF BOTH, AND THEIR AMPLE COMPENSATION—KING JAMES'S 'REULIS AND CAUTELIS'—WEBBE'S 'DISCOURSE'—SLIGHT IN KNOWLEDGE, BUT ENTHUSIASTIC, IF UNCRITICAL, IN APPRECIATION—PUTTENHAM'S (?) 'ART OF ENGLISH POESIE'—ITS ERUDITION—SYSTEMATIC ARRANGEMENT AND EXUBERANT INDULGENCE IN FIGURES—MINORS: HARINGTON, MERES, WEBSTER, BOLTON, ETC.—CAMPION AND HIS 'OBSERVATIONS'—DANIEL AND HIS 'DEFENCE OF RHYME'—BACON—THE 'ESSAYS'—THE 'ADVANCEMENT OF LEARNING'—ITS DENUNCIATION OF MERE WORD-STUDY—ITS VIEW OF POETRY—SOME "OBITER DICTA"—THE WHOLE OF VERY SLIGHT IMPORTANCE—STIRLING'S "ANACRISIS"—BEN JONSON: HIS EQUIPMENT—HIS 'PREFACES,' ETC.—THE DRUMMOND CONVERSATIONS—THE 'DISCOVERIES'—FORM OF THE BOOK—ITS DATE—MOSAIC OF OLD AND NEW—THE FLING AT MONTAIGNE—AT 'TAMERLANE'—THE SHAKESPEARE PASSAGE—AND THAT ON BACON—GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE BOOK.

THE fortune of England in matters political has often been noticed; and it has at least deserved to be noticed, hardly less

often, in matters literary. One of the luckiest of these chances came at the time of the Renaissance; when the necessary changes were effected with the minimum of direct foreign influence, and so slowly that the natural force of the nation and the language was able completely, or almost completely, to assimilate the influences, both foreign and classical, that rained upon it.

Backwardness of English Criticism not implying inferiority.

Nor was this least the case in respect of criticism.[1] The history of this part of English literary evolution has been, until recently, much neglected; and it can hardly be said even yet to have received comprehensive attention. It is all the more necessary to bestow some time and pains on it here, with at least some fair hope of correcting an unfair depreciation. The Baron of Bradwardine (displaying that shrewd appreciation of contrast between English and Scottish characteristics which belonged, if not to himself, to his creator) remarked to Colonel Talbot that it was the Colonel's "humour, as he [the Baron] had seen in other gentlemen of birth and honour" in the Colonel's country, "to derogate from the honour of his burgonet." Gentlemen of the most undoubted birth and honour (as such things go in literature), from Dryden to Matthew Arnold, have displayed this humour in regard to English criticism. But there has been something too much of it; and it has been taken far too literally by the ignorant. M. Brunetière has expressed his opinion that Frenchmen would make *un véritable marché de dupe* if they exchanged Boileau, Marmontel, La Harpe, and Co. for Lessing and some others. I shall not in this place express any opinion on that question directly. But, if this book does what I shall endeavour to make it do, it will at least show that to exchange, for any foreign company, our own critics, from Sidney and Ben Jonson, through Dryden and Addison,

[1] The two chief monographs on this are Spingarn, *op. cit.*, in the division appurtenant (pp. 253-310), and Professor F. E. Schelling, *Poetic and Verse Criticism of the Reign of Elizabeth*, Philadelphia, 1891. Haslewood reprinted most of the texts together in *Ancient Critical Essays*, 2 vols., London, 1811-15, and Mr Arber the most important separately in his *English Reprints*. Mr Gregory Smith is now editing, for the Clarendon Press, the fullest collection yet issued.

Samuel Johnson and Coleridge, Lamb and Hazlitt, to Mr Arnold himself, would be "*un véritable marché de*"—Moses Primrose.

It will have been sufficiently seen in the last volume that the backwardness of English—a backwardness long exaggerated, but to some extent real, and to no small extent healthy—was nowhere exhibited more distinctly than in the department which supplies the materials of this history. Until the close of the fifteenth century, and for some decades afterwards, not a single critical treatise on English existed in the English language, or even in Latin; the nearest approach, even in fragment, to any utterance of the kind being the *naïf* and interesting, but only infantinely critical, remarks of Caxton in his prefaces.[1]

Its cause.

The fact is that, not only until a nation is in command of a single form of "curial" speech for literary purposes, but until sufficient experiments have been made ~~in~~ at least a majority of the branches of literature, criticism is impossible, and would, if possible, be rather mischievous than beneficial. Now England, though it possessed at least one very great author, and more than a fair number of respectable seconds to him, was, up to 1500 at least, in neither case. Till the end of the fourteenth century it had been practically trilingual; it was bilingual till past the end of the fifteenth, if not till far into the seventeenth, so far as literature was concerned. Nor, till the towering eminence of Chaucer had helped to bring the vernacular into prominence, was there any one settled dialect of primacy in the vernacular itself. Further, the fifteenth century was nearly at its end before any bulk of prose, save on religious subjects, was written; and for another century the proportion of translation over original work in prose was very large indeed.

At the same time the scholastic Rhetoric—which had always played to criticism the part of a half-faithless guardian, who keeps his pupil out of the full enjoyment of his property,

[1] Such as those on the "fair language of France," and the strictures passed by Margaret of England and Burgundy on the "default in mine English" (*History of Troy*); on the "right good and fair English" of Lord Rivers (*Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers*).

yet preserves that property in good condition to hand over to him perforce at some future time — was still faithfully taught.[1] The enlarged and more accurate study of the classics at the Revival of Learning set classical criticism once more before students in the originals; the eager study of those originals by Continental scholars was sure to reflect itself upon England; and, lastly, religious zeal and other motives combined, here as elsewhere, to make men determined to get the vernacular into as complete and useful a condition as possible. Nowhere does the intense national spirit, which is the glory of the Tudor period, appear more strongly than in this our scholastic and "umbratile" division of the national life.

The influence of Rhetoric and other matters.

Long, indeed, before this scholastic and regular criticism made its appearance, and during the whole course of the fifteenth century, critical appreciation, stereotyped and unmethodised it may be, but genuine for all that, and stimulating, had made its appearance. The extraordinary quality of Chaucer, the amiable pastime-making of Gower, and, a little later, the busy polygraphy and painful rhetoric of Lydgate, had, almost from the moment of Chaucer's death, attracted and inspired students. The pretty phrase about Chaucer's "gold dew-drops of speech," which justly drew the approval of a critic so often unjustly severe on ante-Renaissance work as Mr Arnold, was, as is known even by tyros in the study of English literature, repeated, expanded, varied by almost every prominent writer for a century and a quarter at least, till it reaches, not exactly final, but most definite and noteworthy, expression in the work of Stephen Hawes, that curious swan-singer of English mediæval poetry. In the to us eccentric, if not positively absurd, exposition of the *Trivium* and *Quadrivium* which diversifies the account of the courtship

Hawes.

[1] There has been some disposition to deny this, and to argue that despite the constant use of the *word* Rhetoric in the fifteenth century, the teaching of the *thing* had declined. I do not think there is much evidence of this as regards England; and the long and curious passage of Hawes, to be presently discussed, is strong evidence against it. Rhetoric has no less than *eight* chapters of the *Pastime of Pleasure*, as against *one* apiece for Grammar and Logic.

of Grandamour and La Bell Pucell,[1] the praise of the Three is led up to by a discussion of Rhetoric and Poetics so elaborate and minute that it occupies more space than is given to all the other Arts together, and nearly double that which is given to all the rest, except a largely extended Astronomy. Rhetoric herself, after being greeted by and greeting her pupil in the most "aureate" style, divides herself into five parts, each of which has its chapter, with a "Replication against ignorant Persons" intervening, and many curious digressions such as the description of a sort of Earthly Paradise of Literature with four rivers, "Understanding," "Closely-Concluding," "Novelty," and "Carbuncles,"[2] and a "Tower of Virgil" in their midst. Lydgate has been already praised for "versifying the depured rhetoric in English language," but he comes up once more for eulogy as "*my* master" in the peroration, and has in fact considerably more space than either Gower or Chaucer. Nor, confused and out of focus as such things must necessarily appear to us, should we forget that Hawes and his generation were not altogether uncritically endeavouring at what was "important to *them*"—the strengthening and enriching, namely, of English vocabulary, the extension of English literary practice and stock.

The first Tudor critics.

Yet their criticism could but be uncritical: and the luck above referred to appears first in the peculiar scholastic character of the criticism of the first English school of critics deserving the name. No one of its members was exactly a man of genius, and this was perhaps lucky; for men of genius have rarely been observed to make the best schoolmasters. All were fully penetrated with the Renaissance adoration of the classics; and this was lucky again, because the classics alone could supply the training and the models just then required by English prose, and even to some extent by English poetry. All were very definitely set against Gallicising and Italianising; and yet again this was lucky, because England had been overdosed with French influence

[1] *The Pastime of Pleasure*, ed. Wright (Percy Society, London, 1845), pp. 27-56.

[2] This Fourth River will appear a less startling "novelty" when the *illuminating* power attributed to the stone is remembered.

for centuries, while their opposition to Italian did perhaps some good, and certainly little harm. But all were thoroughly possessed by the idea that English, adjusted to classical models as far as possible, but not denationalised or denaturalised, ought to be raised into a sufficient medium of literary, as of familiar, communication for Englishmen. And—with that intense Renaissance belief in education, and a high and noble kind of education too, which puts to shame the chattering and pottering of certain later periods on this unlucky subject—all were determined, as far as in them lay, to bring English up to this point. The tendency was spread over a great number of persons, and a considerable period of time. Its representatives ranged from healthy and large-souled, if not quite heroic or inspired, scholars like Ascham to "acrid-quack" pedants like Gabriel Harvey. But the chief of these representatives were the well-known trio, of whom one has just been mentioned—Sir[1] Thomas Wilson, Sir John Cheke, and Roger Ascham. They were all friends, they were all contemporary members (to her glory be it ungrudgingly said) of one University, the University of Cambridge, and though the moral character of all, and especially of the first two, had something of the taints of self-seeking and of sycophancy, which were the blemishes of the Tudor type of writers, all had the merits of that type as exhibited in the man of the study rather than of the field—intense curiosity and industry, a real patriotism, a half-instinctive eagerness to action, a consciousness how best to adorn the Sparta that had fallen to their lot, and a business-like faculty of carrying their conceptions out. From various indications, positive and indirect, it would seem that Cheke, who was the eldest, was also the most "magnetic," the most Socratically suggestive and germinal of the three: but his actual literary work is of much inferior importance to that of Ascham and Wilson.

Wilson's *Art of Rhetoric*[2] is, as the other dates given in the

[1] Wilson has usually been dignified in this way: but some authorities, including the *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, deny him knighthood.

[2] It was not actually the first in English, Leonard Coxe having preceded him "about 1524" with an English adaptation, apparently, of Melanchthon. But this is of no critical importance.

text and notes will show sufficiently, by no means the first book of the school; nor is it that which has, on the whole, the most interest for us. But it deserves precedence historically because, as no other does, it keys, or gears, the new critical tendency on to the old technical rhetoric. The first edition appeared in 1553, dedicated to Edward VI. Wilson dates his prologue to the second[1] on the 7th December 1560; but it does not seem to have been published till 1563. Between the date of the first edition and the writing of this Prologue, Wilson, an exile at Rome, had fallen into the claws of the Inquisition as author of the book and of another on Logic; and, as he recounts with natural palpitation, escaped literally "so as by fire," his prison-house being in flames.

Wilson: his Art of Rhetoric;

His two first Books Wilson faithfully devotes to all the old technicalities—Invention, Disposition, Amplification, "States," and the rest. But his third Book, "Of Elocution,"[2] announces from the first an interest in the matter very different from the jejune rehashings of the ancients (and chiefly of those ancients least worth rehashing) which the mediæval Rhetorics mostly give us. In fact, Wilson had shown himself alive to the importance of the subject in the very opening of the work itself[3] by recounting, with much gusto, how "Phavorinus the Philosopher (as Gellius telleth the tale) did hit a young man over the thumbs very handsomely for using over-old and over-strange words." And as soon as he has divided the requirements of Elocution under the four heads of Plainness, Aptness, Composition, and Exornation, he opens the stop which has been recognised as his characteristic one, by denouncing "strange inkhorn terms." He inveighs against the "far-journeyed gentlemen" who, on their return home, as they love to go in foreign apparel, so they "powder their talk with oversea language," one talking French-English, another "chopping in" with English-Italianated. Professional men, lawyers and auditors, have their turn of censure, and a real literary "document" follows in the censure of the "fine cour-

his attack on "Inkhorn terms."

[1] My copy is of this, which is the fuller.

[2] Fol. 82.

[3] Fol. 1, *verso*, at bottom.

tier who will talk nothing but Chaucer." Most copious is he against undue "Latining" of the tongue, in illustration of which he gives a letter from a Lincolnshire gentleman which may owe royalty either to the Limousin Scholar of Rabelais, or even to Master Francis' own original, Geoffroy Tory himself. And he points the same moral (very much after the manner of Latimer, for whom, as elsewhere appears, he had a great admiration) by divers facetious stories from his experience, "when I was in Cambridge, and student in the King's College," and from other sources. After which he falls in with Cicero as to the qualifications of words allowable.

His dealing with Figures.

"Aptness" follows: and here Sir Thomas, without knowing it, has cut at a folly of language revived three hundred years and more later than his own time. For he laughs at one who, "seeing a house fair-builded," said to his fellow, "Good Lord, what a handsome *phrase* of building is this!" Wilson's butt would have been no little thought of by certain persons at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. Indeed, one may seem to remember a sentence about the merits of a "passage" in a marble chimney-piece, which is a mere echo, conscious or unconscious, of his "phrase." The same temper appears in the longer remarks on Composition; but when we come to Exornation, "a gorgeous beautifying of the tongue with borrowed words and change of sentence," Wilson's lease of originality has run out. He is still in the bondage of the Figures, which he describes ambitiously as a kind "not equally sparpled[1] about the whole oration, but so dissevered and parted as stars stand in the firmament, or flowers in a garden, or pretty-devised antiques in a cloth of Arras." The enumeration is full of character and Elizabethan piquancy; but it still has the old fault of beginning at the wrong end. When a man writes even a good oration, much more that far higher thing a good piece of prose (which may be an oration, if need serves, or anything else), he does not say to himself, "Now I shall

[1] One may regret "sparple" and "disparple," which are good and picturesque Englishings of *e(s)parpiller*. The forms "sparkle" and "disparkle," which seem to have been commoner, are no loss, as being equivocal.

throw in some hyperbaton; now we will exhibit a little anadiplosis; this is the occasion surely for a passage of zeugma." He writes as the spirit moves him, and as the way of art leads. One could wish, in reading Wilson, for another Sir Thomas, to deal with the Figurants as he has dealt with the Chaucerists and the Lincolnshire Latinisers. But we must not expect too much at once: and lucky are we if we often, or even sometimes, get so bold a striking out into new paths for a true end as we find in this *Art of Rhetoric*.

Cheke: his resolute Anglicism and anti-preciosity.

Cheke has left no considerable English work, and he seems —as it is perhaps inevitable that at least some of the leaders in every period of innovation should seem—to have pushed innovation itself to and over the verge of crotchet. He was a spelling and pronouncing reformer both in Greek and English; and, classical scholar and teacher as he was, he seems to have fallen in with that curious survival of "Saxon" rendering of words not of Saxon origin, the great storehouse of which is the work of Reginald Pecock a century earlier. But he appears to have been one of the main and most influential sources of the double stream of tendency observable in Wilson himself, and still more in Ascham—the tendency on the one hand to use the classics as models and trainers in the formation of a generally useful and practicable English style, and on the other to insist that neither from classical nor from any other sources should English be adulterated by "inkhorn terms," as Wilson calls them,[1] of any kind—that is to say, by archaisms, technicalities, preciousnesses, fished up as it were from the bottom of the ink-pot, instead of simply and naturally taken as they came from its surface to the pen. What Ascham tells us that he said of Sallust is the spirit, the centre, the kernel, of the criticism of the whole school—a dread that is to say, and a dislike and a censure of what he calls the "uncontented care to write better than he could."[2] And it must

[1] Not that the phrase is of his invention. It seems to have been a catchword of the time, and occurs in Bale (1543), in Peter Ashton's version of Jovius (1546), &c.

[2] Of course Cheke had in his mind the passage of Quintilian concerning Julius Florus (*v. supra*, i. 313).

be obvious that this sharply formulated censure is itself a critical *point de repère* of the greatest value. It is well that it was not too much listened to—for the greatest results of English prose and verse in the great period, beginning a few years after Cheke's death and continuing for an old man's lifetime, were the result of this "never contented care," which still reached something better than content. But if, at this early period, it had had too much way given to it, if the vigorous but somewhat sprawling infancy of Elizabethan English had been bid and let sprawl simply at its pleasure, the consequences could not but have been disastrous.

His criticism of Sallust.

This criticism of Sallust, which may be found at length in Ascham's *Schoolmaster*,[1] is quite a *locus* in its kind. It is not of the justest, for the prepossession of the sentence quoted above (which stands in the forefront of it) colours it all through. It has funny little scholastic lapses in logic, such as the attempt to apply the old brocard *Orator est vir bonus dicendi peritus* to the disadvantage of Sallust, as compared not only with Cicero but with Cæsar, on the score of morality. It would have been pleasant to observe the countenances of Fausta and Servilia if this had been argued in their joint presence. And the dislike of Thucydides, to which a disliker of Sallust is almost necessarily driven, argues a literary palate not of the most refined. But the disposition of the supposed causes of the faults of Sallust's style, when, having sown his wild oats, he took to literature, and borrowed his vocabulary from Cato and Varro, and his method from Thucydides himself, is an exceedingly ingenious piece of critical pleading. Even if it will not hold water, it shows us a stage of criticism advanced, in some directions, beyond anything that classical or mediæval times can show. The other great "place" of Cheke's writing occurs in his letter[2] to Hoby on that learned knight's translation of Castiglione, with its solemn judgment (the author, though but in middle age, was ill, and in fact almost dying), "I am of this opinion, that our own tongue

[1] Ed. Arber, pp. 154-159.

[2] This may be found in Arber's Introduction to the book just cited, p. 5; or in Professor Raleigh's ed. of Hoby (London, 1900), pp. 12, 13.

should be written clean and pure, unmixed and unmangled with borrowing of other tongues, wherein if we take no heed betimes, ever borrowing and never paying, she shall be fain to keep house as a bankrupt." The analogy, of course, is a false one:—there is no need to pay, nor possibility of payment, any more than a conquering monarchy needs to fear the repayment of the tribute it draws from others, or than a sturdy plant need dread bankruptcy because it owes nourishment to earth, and air, and the rain of heaven. But once more the position is a definite, and not a wholly untenable, critical position: and Cheke shows himself here as at once engineer and captain of it.

Ascham.

The chief representative of this school is, however, beyond question, the always agreeable, and but seldom other than admirable, author of *Toxophilus* and *The Schoolmaster* himself.[1] His positive achievements in English literature do not here directly concern us; nor does the debate between those who regard him as a Euphuist before Euphuism, and those who will have him to be the chief example of the plain style in early Elizabethan literature. I confess myself to be on the side of the latter; though I know what the former mean. But it is with what Ascham thought as a critic, not with what he did as a writer, that we are here busy; and on this there is no reasonable opening for serious difference of opinion. Ascham's critical position and opinions are clear, not only from his two famous and pleasant little books, but from the constant literary references in his letters, ranging from elaborate lucubrations on the study of the classics to an amusing little Cambridge fling at the older university, where, as we learn from a letter of exactly the middle of the century, taste was in so shocking a condition that Oxford men actually paid more attention to Lucian and Apuleius than to Cicero and Xenophon.[2]

[1] For these two books Mr Arber's excellent reprints can hardly be bettered. But for our purposes the *Letters* are also needed; and these, with other things, will be found in Giles's edition of the *Works*, 3 vols. in 4, London, 1864-65.

[2] *Quid omnes Oxonienses sequuntur plane nescio, sed ante aliquot menses in Aula incidi in quendam illius Academiæ, qui nimium præferendo Lucianum, Plutarchum et Herodianum, Senecam, A. Gellium, et Apuleium utramque linguam in nimis senescentem et effœtam ætatem compingere mihi videbatur*—Giles, i. 190. The whole letter (to Sturm) is worth reading.

The *Toxophilus* itself is a critical document in parts, both for the initial manifesto of his desire "to write this English matter in the English tongue for English men," and for the more elaborate defence of the proceeding (a defence repeated in the numerous Latin letters accompanying the copies of the book he sent to his friends), as well as for one of those hits at Romance which were characteristic of Renaissance scholars too generally, and were particularly to be expected in very moral and rather prosaic persons like Ascham. But we necessarily turn to the *Schoolmaster* for a full exposition of Ascham's critical *ethos*, and we find it.

His patriotism.

A tendency rather to slight poetry, one great heresy concerning it (of which more presently), and the above-mentioned contempt or even horror of romance — these are the worst things to be noted here. All these are connected with a wider critical heresy, which is prevalent in England to this day, and which emerges most interestingly in this infancy of English criticism. This heresy is the valuing of examples, and even of whole kinds, of literary art, not according to their perfection on their own artistic standards, not according to the quantity or quality of artistic pleasure which they are fitted to give; but according to certain principles—patriotic, political, ethical, or theological—which the critic holds or does not hold, as the case may be. This fallacy being one of those proper—or, at least, inseparably accidental—to the human intellect, is of course perceptible enough in antiquity itself. It is, as we have seen, rife in Plato, and more rife in Plutarch; and there is no doubt that the devotion of the Renaissance to the greatest of Greek philosophers and prosemen, to the most entertaining of Greek biographers and moralists, had not a little to do with its reappearance, though the struggle of the Reformation, and the national jealousies which this struggle bred or helped, had more. But no one has given more notable examples of it than Ascham by his attack on "books of feigned chivalry," in *Toxophilus*,[1] and his well-known censure of the *Morte d'Arthur* in *The Schoolmaster*.[2]

His horror of Romance,

[1] P. 19, ed. Arber. The passage contains a stroke at monasticism.

[2] P. 80, ed. Arber.

Than this book there was, at Ascham's date, no more exquisite example of English prose in existence. There is not to this day a book, either in prose or in verse, which has more of the true Romantic charm. There are few better instances anywhere of subtly combined construction of story than are to be found in some of its parts; and, to a catholic judgment, which busies itself with the matter and spirit of a book, there are few books which teach a nobler temper of mind, which inculcate with a more wonderful blending of sternness and sympathy the great moral that "the doer shall suffer," that "for all these things God shall bring us into judgment," or which display more accomplished patterns of man and sweeter examples of woman. Yet Ascham (and he had read the book) saw in it nothing but "open manslaughter and bold bawdry."

and of the Morte d'Arthur.

Apart from this somewhat Philistine prudery—which occupies itself more reasonably with Italian *novelle*, and the translations of them into English—Ascham's criticism is of a piece with that of the whole school in all but a very few points. He differed with Wilson, and with most of the scholars of his time, on the subject of translation, which he rightly enough regarded as a useful engine of education, but as quite incapable of giving any literary equivalent for the original. He agreed both with Wilson and with Cheke as to the impropriety of adulterating English with any foreign tongue, ancient or modern. He was, all the same, an exceedingly fervent Ciceronian and devotee of the golden age of Latin. And when we come in one[1] of his letters to Sturm on the name of Pigna (*v. supra*, p. 62), the rival of Cinthio Giraldi, there seems to be established a contact, of the most interesting, between English and Italian criticism. But (as indeed we might have expected) no allusion to Pigna's view of the despised romances is even hinted: it is his dealing with the *aureolum libellum* of Horace that Ascham has read, his dealings with Aristotle and Sophocles that he wishes to read.

Putting his theory and his practice together, and neglecting

[1] Thought to be his last, and written in Dec. 1568; ed. Giles, ii. 189. The correspondence with Sturm is, as we should expect, particularly literary.

for the moment his moral "craze," we can perceive in him a tolerably distinct ideal of English prose, which he has only not illustrated by actual criticism of the reviewing sort, because the material was so scanty. This prose is to be fashioned with what may be excusably called a kind of squint—looking partly at Latin and Greek construction and partly at English vernacular usage. It does not seem that, great as was his reverence for Cheke, he was bitten by Cheke's mania for absolute Teutonism; nor does he appear to have gone to the extreme of Latimer and Latimer's admirer, Wilson, in caring to mingle merely familiar speech with his ordered vernacular. But he went some way in this direction: he was by no means proof against that Delilah of alliteration which, like a sort of fetch or ghost of the older alliterative prosody, bewitched the mid-sixteenth-century verse and prose of England, and had not lost hold on Spenser himself. And he had belief in certain simple Figures of the antithetic and parallel kind. But he was, above all, a schoolmaster — as even being dead he spoke—to English literature; and his example and his precepts together tended to establish a chastened, moderately classical, pattern of writing, which in the next generation produced the admirable English prose of Hooker, and was not without influence on the less accomplished, but more germinal and protreptic, style of Jonson.

His general critical attitude to Prose,

We must praise him less when we come to poetry. The history of the craze for classical metre and against rhyme in England, which practically supplies our earliest subject of purely critical debate, is a very curious one, and may—perhaps must—be considered from more points of view than one, before it is rightly and completely understood. At first sight it looks like mere mid-summer madness—the work of some Puck of literature—if not even as the incursion into the calm domains of scholarship and criticism of that popular *delirium tremens*, which has been often illustrated in politics. Shifting of the standpoint, and more careful consideration, will discover some excuses for it, as well as much method in it. But it must be regarded long, and examined carefully, before the real fact is discovered — the fact that,

and to Poetry.

mischievous and absurd as it was in itself, unpardonable as are the attempts to revive it, or something like it, at this time of day, it was in its own day a kind of beneficent "distemper" —a necessary, if morbid, stage in the development of English prosody and English criticism.

The craze for Classical Metres.

Inasmuch as the most obvious and indubitable, as well as universal, cause of the craze was the profound Renaissance admiration for the classics, it was inevitable that something of the kind should make its appearance in most European countries. But other and counteracting causes prevented it from assuming, in any of them, anything like the importance that it attained in England. Unrhymed classical metres, like almost every literary innovation of the time, had been first attempted in Italy;[1] but the established and impregnable supremacy of forms like the Sonnet, the Canzone, the *ottava* and *terza rima*, put rhyme out of real danger there. They were attempted in France.[2] But French had for centuries possessed a perfectly well-defined system of prosody, adapted and adequate to the needs and nature of the language. And, moreover, the singularly *atonic* quality of this language, its want not only of the remotest approach to quantity but even of any decided accent, made the experiment not merely ridiculous, as indeed it mostly was in English, but all but impossible. Spanish was following Italian, and did not want to follow anything else: and German was not in case to compete.

Special wants of English Prosody.

With English the patient was very much more predisposed to the disease. Not only two, but practically three, different systems of prosody, which were really to some extent opposed to each other, and might well seem more opposed than they actually were, disputed, in practice, the not too fertile or flourishing field of English poetry. There was the true Chaucerian system of blended English prosody, the legitimate representative of the same composite influences which have moulded English language, and which had been slowly developed through the half-chaotic beginnings of Middle English verse, and then with almost premature sud-

[1] *V. supra*, p. 46.

[2] *V. supra*, p. 127.

denness perfected up to a certain stage by Chaucer himself. This system combined—though not yet in perfect freedom—the strict syllabic foot-division of the French with the syllabic licence of Anglo-Saxon, so as to produce a system of syllabic equivalence similar in nature to, if not yet fully in practice freer than, that of the Greek Iambic trimeter. It admitted a considerable variety of metres, the base-integers of which were the octosyllable and decasyllable, with lines of six, twelve, and others occasionally, combined in pairs or arranged in stanzas of more or less intricate forms. But—by a historic accident which has even yet to be rather taken as found than fully explained—nobody for more than a hundred years had been able to produce really good regular[1] poetry in Southern English by this metre, and certain changes in pronunciation and vocabulary—especially the disuse of the final vocalised *e*—were putting greater and greater difficulties in the way of its practice.

Its kinds: (1) *Chaucerian.*

Secondly, there was the revived alliterative metre, either genuine—that is to say, only roughly syllabic and not rhymed, but rhythmed nearer to the anapæstic form than to any other—or allied with rhyme, and sometimes formed into stanzas of very considerable intricacy. This, which had arisen during the fourteenth century, no one quite knows how or where, apparently in the North, and which had maintained a vigorous though rather artificial life during the fifteenth, had not wholly died out, being represented partly by the ballad metre, by doggerel twelves, fourteeners, and other long shambling lines, and by a still lively tendency towards alliteration itself, both in metred verse and in prose. Latterly, during Ascham's own youth, a sort of *rapprochement* between these two had made the fourteeners and Alexandrines, rather less doggerelised, very general favourites; but had only managed to communicate to them a sort of lolloping amble, very grievous and sickening to the delicate ear.

(2) *Alliterative.*

Thirdly, and in close connection with this combination,

[1] There had, of course, been some charming jets of folk-song in ballad, carol, and what not.

Wyatt, Surrey, and other poets had, by imitating Italian models, especially in the sonnet, striven to raise, to bind together, to infuse with energy and stiffen with backbone, the ungainly shambling body of English verse: and Surrey, again following the Italians, had tried, with some success, the unrhymed decasyllable soon to be so famous as blank verse.

(3) *Italianated.*

Now critical observation at the time might survey this field with view as extensive and intensive as it could apply, and be far from satisfied with the crops produced. To present the first system there was nobody but Chaucer, who, great and greatly admired as he was, was separated from the men of 1550 by a period of time almost as long as that which separates us from Pope, and by a much greater gulf of pronunciation and accent. Nobody could write like Chaucer—unless the Chaucerian *Chorizontes* are right in attributing *The Court of Love* to this time, in which case there was some one who could write very much like Chaucer indeed. There was no Langland, and nobody who could write in the least like Langland. In sheer despair, men of talent like Skelton, when they were not Chaucerising heavily, were indulging (of course with more dulcet intervals now and then) in mere wild gambades of doggerel.

Deficiencies of all three.

But it will be said, Was there not the new Italianated style of poets of such promise as Wyatt and Surrey? There was. Yet it must be remembered that Wyatt and Surrey themselves are, after all, poets of more promise than performance; that their promise itself looks much more promising to us, seeing as we do its fulfilment in Spenser and onward, than it need have done, or indeed could do, to contemporaries; that stalwart Protestants and stout Englishmen feared and loathed the Italianation of anything English; and lastly, that even the prosody of Wyatt and Surrey is, in a very high degree, experimental, tentative, incomplete. We laugh, or are disgusted, at the twists and tortures applied by the hexametrists to our poor mother tongue; but Wyatt at least puts almost as awkward constraints on her.

It is not surprising that in the presence of these unsatisfying

The temptations of Criticism in this respect.

things, and in the nonage of catholic literary criticism, men should have turned for help to those classics which were the general teachers and helpers of the time. There was indeed—already published just as Ascham had attained his year of discretion—a treatise, by the greatest man of letters for some fifteen hundred years at least, which contained the germ of a warning. But it is not likely that Ascham or any of his good Cambridge friends had seen Trissino's translation of the *De Vulgari Eloquio*; and, if any had, it would have been a stroke of genius to carry Dante's generalisation from the Romance tongues further. To almost any man of the Renaissance it would have seemed half sacrilege and half madness to examine ancient and modern literatures on the same plane, and decide what was germane to each and what common to all. Greek Prosody had been good enough, with very minor alterations, for Latin; how should any of these upstart modern tongues refuse what had been good enough for both? And let it be remembered, too, that they were only half wrong. Greek and Latin *did* provide up to a certain point—that of the foot as distinguished from the metre—examples which, duly guarded, could be quite safely followed, which indeed could not and cannot be neglected without loss and danger for English. It was when they went further, and endeavoured to impose the classical combinations of feet on English, that they fell.

Its adventurers: Ascham himself.

Yet even from the first they had glimpses and glimmerings of truth which might have warned them; while in their very errors they often display that combination of independence and practical spirit which is the too often undervalued glory of English criticism. Ascham himself—besotted as he is with wrath[1] against "our

[1] It is curious that, in this very *début* of English criticism, the incivility with which critics are constantly and too justly charged makes its appearance. Ascham would seem to have been a good-natured soul enough. Yet he abuses rhyme and its partisans in the true "Père Duchêne" style which some critics still affect. "To follow the Goths in rhyming instead of the Greeks in versifying" is "to eat acorns with swine, when we may eat wheat bread among men." Rhymers are "a rude multitude," "rash, ignorant heads," "wandering blindly in their foul wrong way," &c.

rude beggarly rhyming," confident as he is that the doggerel of his old friend Bishop Watson of Lincoln—

> "All travellers do gladly report great praise of Ulysses,
> For that he knew many men's manners, and saw many cities,"—

exhibits[1] as "right quantitie" of syllables and true order of versifying as either Greek or Latin—yet saw[2] that "our English tongue doth not well receive the nature of *Carmen Heroicum*, because *dactylus*, the aptest foot for that verse, is seldom found in English." Truly it is not; your dactyl is apt to play the "Waler"—to buck under an English rider, and either throw him altogether, or force the alteration of the pace to anapæsts. The best apparent dactylics in English—the verses of Kingsley's *Andromeda*—are not really dactylic-hexameters at all; they are five-foot anapæstics, with a very strong *anacrusis* at the beginning, and a weak hypercatalectic syllable at the end. And with this fatal confession of Ascham (who had not a very poetical head), that of Campion, an exquisite poet and a keen though warped critic, coincides, as we shall see, a generation later. But the thing had to be done; and it was done, or at least attempted.

Watson and Drant.

When the craze first took form in England we do not exactly know. Ascham observes vaguely that "this misliking of rhyming beginneth not now of any newfangle singularity, but hath been long been misliked, and that of men of greatest learning and deepest judgment."[3] We all think that the persons who agree with us are men of great learning and deep judgment, so that matter may be passed over. But apparently the thing was one, and not the best, of the fruits of that study of the classics, and specially of Greek, which, beginning at Oxford, passed thence to Cambridge, and was taken up so busily in Ascham's own college, St John's. Thomas Watson,[4]

[1] *Schoolmaster, ed. cit.*, p. 73. Ascham actually *quotes* the Greek and the Latin of Homer and Horace, and declares Watson's stuff to be made as "naturally" as the one and as "aptly" as the other!

[2] Ibid., p. 145.

[3] P. 147. The extraordinary confusion of mind of the time is illustrated by Ascham's sheltering himself behind Quintilian!

[4] Not to be confounded with Thomas Watson, the author of the *Hecatompathia*, who came later, and was an Oxford man.

the Bishop of Lincoln, above referred to, was Master of the College; Ascham himself, it is hardly necessary to say, was a fellow of it. And still descending in the collegiate hierarchy, it was an undergraduate of St John's, Thomas Drant, who somewhat later drew up rules for Anglo-Classic versifying—rules that occupied Spenser and Harvey, with the result of producing some interesting letters and some very deplorable doggerel. Drant seems to have been the "legislator of Parnassus" to the innovators; but we have little work of his, and that little does not bear on the special subject.

Mischievous craze as it was, however,[1] it had the merit of turning the attention of Englishmen to really critical study of poetry, and it appears, more or less, as the *motif* of most of the group of critical writings, from Gascoigne's *Notes of Instruction* to Daniel's *Defence of Rhyme*, which we shall now discuss.

Gascoigne.

In the most interesting little treatise[2] which heads or initials[3] the now goodly roll of books in English criticism, Thomas Gascoigne, though he was himself a Cambridge man, does not make any reference to the craze. The tract was written at the request of an Italian friend, Eduardo Donati. It is exceedingly short; but as full of matter, and very good matter, as need be. In duty bound Gascoigne begins with insistence on fine invention, without which neither "thundering in rym ram ruff, quoth my master Chaucer," nor "rolling in pleasant words," nor "abounding in apt vocables," will suffice. But he passes over this very swiftly, as over trite and obvious expressions,[4] suitableness of phrase, &c., and attacks the great literary question of the time, Prosody.

[1] Some authorities have been much too mild towards it. For instance, the late Mr Henry Morley, who says, "Thomas Drant, of course, did not suppose that his rules were sufficient." This is charitable, but outside, or rather against, the evidence.

[2] *Certain Notes of Instruction concerning the making of verse or rhyme in English*, ed. Arber (with *The Steel Glass*, &c.), pp. 31-41, London, 1868. Originally in the fourth edition of Gascoigne's *Poems* (London, 1575). Mr Spingarn sees indebtedness in it to Ronsard.

[3] The observations of Ascham, Wilson, and the others being incidental merely.

[4] "If I should undertake to write in praise of a gentlewoman, I would neither praise her crystal eye nor her cherry lip."

His Notes of Instruction.

He begins his attack by the modest and half-apologetic request, "This may seem a presumptuous order," that, whatever the verse chosen be, it be regular, and not wobbling backwards and forwards between twelve and fourteen syllables on no principle. Then he enjoins the maintenance of regular and usual accent or quantity; and in so doing insists on a standard in regard to which not merely Wyatt and Surrey earlier, but even Spenser later, were much less scrupulous. "Treasure," he says, you must use with the first syllable long and the second short: you must not make it "treasure." And then he makes a very curious observation:—

"Commonly nowadays in English rhymes, for I dare not call them English verses, we use none other order but a foot of two syllables," to wit, the Iamb. "We have," he says, "in other times used other kinds of metres," as

"No wight ⌟ in the world | that wealth | can attain,"[1]

(*i.e.*, anapæsts), while "our Father Chaucer had used the same liberty in feet and measures that the Latinists do use," that is to say, syllabic equivalence of two shorts to a long. And he laments the tyranny of the Iamb; but says, "we must take the ford as we find it."

Then, after some particular cautions,—a renewed one as to quantifying words aright—"understànd," not "undérstand," &c., as to using as many monosyllables as possible (it is amusing to read this and remember the opposite caution of Pope),—he comes to rhyme, and warns his scholar against rhyme without reason. Alliteration is to be moderate: you must not "hunt a letter to death." Unusual words are to be employed carefully and with a definite purpose to "draw attentive reading." Be clear and sensible.[2] Keep English order, and invert substantive and adjective seldom and cautiously. Be moderate in the use

[1] Gascoigne does not use this division, or ¯ and ˘, but ´ and ` for long and short, ~ (circumflex) for common, and indented lines (⋀⋀⋀ and ⋀W W) for dissyllabic and trisyllabic foot arrangements.

[2] "For the haughty obscure verse doth not much delight, and the verse that is too easy is like a tale of a roasted horse."

also of that "shrewd fellow, poetical licence," who actually reads "hea|ven" for "heavn"![1]

As for the pause or Cæsura, Gascoigne is not injudicious. "The pause," he says, "will stand best in the middle" of an octosyllable, at the fourth syllable in a "verse of ten," at the sixth (or middle again) of an Alexandrine, and at the eighth in a fourteener. But it is at the discretion of the writer in Rhythm royal: "it forceth not where the pause be till the end of the line"—and this liberty will assuredly draw to more.

Next he enumerates stanzas:—Rhyme royal itself, ballades, sonnets, Dizains, and Sixains, Virelays, and the "Poulter's measure," of twelve and fourteen alternately, to which his own contemporaries were so unfortunately addicted. You must "finish the sentence and meaning at the end of every staff": and (by the way) he has "forgotten a notable kind of rhyme called riding rhyme, which is what our father Chaucer used in his Canterbury tales, and in divers other delectable and light enterprises." It is good for "a merry tale," Rhyme royal for a "grave discourse," Ballads and Sonnets for love-poems, &c., and it would be best, in his judgment, to keep Poulter's measure for Psalms and hymns. And so he makes an end, "doubting his own ignorance."

The chief points about this really capital booklet are as follows:—Gascoigne's recognition of the importance of overhauling English Prosody; his good sense on the matter of the cæsura, and of Chaucer's adoption of the principles of equivalenced scansion; his acknowledgment with regret of the impoverishment which, in the sterility of the mid-sixteenth century before Spenser, was a fact, as resulting from the tyranny of the iamb; the shrewdness of his general remarks; and, last but not least, his entire silence about the new versifying, the "Dranting of Verses." It is possible (for though he was at Cambridge he seems to admit that he did not acquire

Their capital value.

[1] See Mitford, *Harmony of Language*, p. 105, who thinks the licence just the other way, and indeed roundly pronounces the pronunciation in one syllable "impossible." A little later, again, Guest thinks the *dis*-syllable "uncouth and vulgar." A most documentary disagreement!

any great scholarship there) that he had not come into contact with any one who took interest in this: but it is improbable that it would have appealed to his robust sense of poetry, unsicklied by Harvey's pedantry, and not misled by Spenser's classical enthusiasm.

At this time, however, or not long after—the *Notes* must have been written between 1572 and 1575, and the correspondence of Spenser and Harvey actually appeared in 1579—these other persons were thinking a great deal about the classical metres. The *Five Letters* ("Three" and "Two"[1]—not to be confused with the *Four Letters* which Harvey issued long afterwards about Greene) are full of the subject, and of poetical criticism generally. They, together with the controversy which arose over Gosson's *School of Abuse*, and which indirectly produced Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*, make the years 1579-1580 as notable in the history of English criticism as the appearances of *Euphues* and *The Shepherd's Calendar* make them in that of creative literature.

Spenser and Harvey.

Spenser's first letter informs Harvey that "they [Sidney and Dyer] have proclaimed in their *ἀρειωπάγῳ*[2] [the literary *cénacle* of Leicester House] a general surceasing and silence of bald rhymers, and also of the very best too: instead whereof they have, by the authority of their whole Senate, prescribed certain laws and rules of quantities of English syllables for English verse, having had thereof already great practice, and drawn me to their faction." And later, "I am more in love with English versifying than with rhyming, which I should have done long since if I would have followed your counsel." He hints, however, gently, that Harvey's own verses (these coterie writers always keep the name "verses" for their hybrid abortions) once or twice "make a breach in Master Drant's rules." Which was, of course, a very dreadful thing, only to be "condoned *tanto poetæ*." He requites Harvey with a few Iambics, which he "dare warrant precisely perfect for the feet, and varying not one

[1] See Grosart's *Works of Gabriel Harvey*, vol. i. pp. 6-150. Parts will be found in the Globe edition of Spenser, pp. 706-710.

[2] I am not responsible for the eccentricities of this form.

inch from the Rule." And then follows the well-known piece beginning—

"Unhappy verse, the witness of my unhappy state,"

where certainly the state must have been bad if it was as infelicitous as the verse.

Not such was Gabriel Harvey that he might take even a polite correction; and his reply is a proper donnish setting-down of a clever but presumptuous youth. He respects the Areopagus—indeed they were persons of worship, and Harvey was a *roturier*—more than Spenser can or will suppose, and he likes the trimeters (indeed, though poor things, they were Spenser's own after all, and such as no man but Spenser could have written in their foolish kind) more than Spenser "can or will easily believe." But—and then follows much reviewing in the now stale hole-picking kind, which has long been abandoned, save by the descendants of Milbourne and Kenrick, and a lofty protestation that "myself never saw your gorbellied master's rules, nor heard of them before."

The Three Letters which follow[1] are distributed in subject between an Earthquake (which has long since ceased to quake for us) and the hexameters. They open with a letter from Spenser, in which he broaches the main question, "Whether our English accent will endure the Hexameter?" and doubts. Yet he has a hankering after it, encloses his own—

"See ye the blindfoldèd pretty god, that feathered archer," &c.,

and prays that Harvey would either follow the rules of the great Drant, indorsed by Sidney, or else send his own. Harvey replies in double. The first part is some very tragical mirth about the earthquake; the second, "A Gallant Familiar Letter," tackles the question of versification.

This gallant familiarity might possibly receive from harsh critics the name of uneasy coxcombry; but it is at any rate clear that the author has set about the matter very seriously. He expresses delight that Sidney and Dyer, "the two very diamonds of her Majesty's Court," have begun to help forward

[1] In order of composition, not of publication.

"the exchange of barbarous and balductum[1] rhymes with artificial verses"; thinks their "lively example" will be much better than Ascham's "dead advertisement" in the *Schoolmaster*. He would like (as should we) to have Drant's prosody. His own Rules and Precepts will probably not be very different; but he will take time before drafting them finally. He thinks (reasonably enough) that before framing a standard English Grammar or Rhetoric (therein including Prosody), a standard orthography must first be agreed upon. And he suggests that "we beginners" (this from the author of these truly "barbarous and balductum" antics to the author of the *Faerie Queene* is distinctly precious) have the advantage, like Homer and Ennius, of setting examples. "A New Year's Gift to M. George Bilchaunger," in very doleful hexameters, follows, and after a little gird at Spenser's "See ye the Blindfoldèd," another sprout of Harvey's brain in the same kind, which has been, perhaps, more, and more deservedly, laughed at than any of these absurdities, except the scarcely sane jargon-doggerel of Stanyhurst—

> "What might I call this tree? a Laurell? o bonny Laurell!
> Needs to thy boughs will I bow this knee, and veil my bonetto;"

with yet another—

> "Since *Galateo*[2] came in, and Tuscanism gan usurp."

He thinks that the author of this last "wanted but some delicate choice elegant poesy" of Sidney's or Dyer's for a good pattern. After some further experiments of his own, or his brother's, in hexametring some of Spenser's own "emblems" in the *Calendar*, he turns to Spenser himself, whom, it seems, he ranks next the same "incomparable and miraculous genius in the catalogue of our very principal English Aristarchi." He

[1] This word, which is certainly a cousin of "balderdash," is a good example of the slang and jargon so often mixed with their preciousness by the Elizabethans. Nash borrowed it from Harvey to use against him; and the eccentric Stanyhurst even employs it in his *Virgil*. Stanyhurst's hexameters, by the way (*vide* Mr Arber's Reprint in the *English Scholars Library*, No. 10, London, 1880), are, thanks partly to their astounding lingo, among the maddest things in English literature; but his prose prefatory matter, equally odd in phrase, has some method in its madness.

[2] La Casa's book of etiquette and behaviour.

proceeds to speak of some of that earlier work which, as in *The Dying Pelican*, is certainly, or in the *Dreams*, possibly, lost. After which he writes himself down for all time in the famous passage about the *Faerie Queene*, which he had "once again nigh forgotten," but which he now sends home "in neither better nor worse case than he found her." "As for his judgment," he is "void of all judgment if Spenser's *Nine Comedies* [also lost] are not nearer Ariosto's than that Elvish Queene is to the *Orlando*, which" Spenser "seems to emulate, and hopes to overgo." And so he ends his paragraph with the yet more famous words, "If so be the *Faery Queene* be fairer in your eye than the Nine Muses, and Hobgoblin run away with the garland from Apollo, mark what I say, and yet I will not say what I thought, but there an end for this once, and fare you well till God or some good Angel put you in a better mind!" Which words let all who practise criticism grave in their memories, and recite them daily, adding, "Here, but for the grace of God——!" if they be modest and fear Nemesis.

After an interval, however, Harvey returns to actual criticism, and shows himself in rather better figure by protesting, in spite of "five hundred Drants," against the alteration of the quantity of English words by accenting "Majesty" and "Manfully," and "Carpenter" on the second syllable. And he falls in with Gascoigne on the subject of such words as "Heaven." Nor could he, even if he had been far less of a pedant and coxcomb, have given better or sounder doctrine than that with which he winds up. "It is the vulgar and natural mother Prosody, that alone worketh the feat, as the only supreme foundress and reformer of Position, Diphthong, Orthography, or whatsoever else; whose affirmatives are nothing worth if she once conclude the negative." And for this sound doctrine, not unsoundly enlarged upon, and tipped with a pleasant Latin farewell to *mea domina Immerita, mea bellissima Collina Clouta*," let us leave Gabriel in charity.[1]

[1] The further letters to Spenser, which Dr Grosart has borrowed from the Camden Society's *Letter-book of Gabriel Harvey*, touch literary matters not seldom, but with no new important deliverances. In the later (1592) *Four Letters*, the embroidery of railing at the dead Greene and the living Nash has almost entirely hidden the literary canvas.

Meanwhile the strong critical set of the time—so interesting, if not so satisfying, after the absolute silence of criticism in English earlier—was being shown in another direction by a different controversy, to which, as we have seen, Spenser makes allusion. The points which chiefly interested him at the moment were formal; those to which we now come were partly of the same class though of another species, partly transcending form.

The Puritan attack on Poetry.

Stephen Gosson is one of the persons of whom, as is by no means always the case, it would really be useful to know more than we do know about their private history and character. What disgust, what disappointment, what tardy development of certain strains of temper and disposition he underwent, we do not know; but something of the kind there must have been to make a young man of four-and-twenty, a fair scholar, already of some note for both dramatic and poetical writing, and obviously of no mean intellectual powers, swing violently round, and denounce plays, and poems, and almost literature generally, as the works of the Devil. It is quite insufficient to ejaculate "Puritanism!" or "Platonism!" for neither of these was a new thing, and the question is why Gosson was not affected by them earlier or later.

Gosson.

Let us, however, now as always, abstain from speculation when we have fact; and here we have at least three very notable facts — Gosson's *School of Abuse*,[1] with its satellite tractates, Lodge's untitled *Reply*,[2] and the famous *Defence of Poesy* or *Apology for Poetry*[3] which Sidney (to whom Gosson had rashly dedicated his book) almost certainly intended as a counterblast, though either out of scorn, as Spenser hints, or (more probably from what we know of him) out of amiable

[1] Reprinted by Mr Arber, with its almost immediately subsequent *Apology*. I wish he had added the *Ephemerides of Phialo* which accompanied the *Apology*, and the *Plays Confuted* of three years later; for these books—very small and very difficult of access—add something to the controversy.

[2] Several times reprinted; most recently by the present writer in *Elizabethan and Jacobean Pamphlets* (London, 1892).

[3] Also frequently (indeed oftener) reprinted, as by Arber, London, 1868; Shuckburgh, Cambridge, 1891; Cook, Boston (U.S.A.), 1890.

and courteous dislike to requite a compliment with an insult, he takes no direct notice of Gosson at any time.

The School of Abuse.

The School of Abuse (which is written in such a style as almost to out-Euphuise the contemporary *Euphues* itself) is critical wholly from the moral side, and with reference to the actual, not the necessary or possible, state of poetry. There are even, the author says, some good plays, including at least one of his own; but the whole of ancient poetry (he says little or nothing of modern) is infected by the blasphemy and immorality of Paganism, and nearly the whole of the modern stage is infected by the abuses of the theatre—of which Gosson speaks in terms pretty well identical with those which Puritan teachers had for some years past been using in sermon and treatise. But outside of the moral and religious line he does not step: he is solely occupied with the lies and the licence of poets and players.

Lodge's Reply.

Lodge's reply (the title-page of it has been lost, but it *may* be the *Honest Excuses* to which Gosson refers as having been published against him) is almost entirely an appeal to authority, seasoned with a little personal invective. Lodge strings together all the classical names he can think of, with a few mediæval, to show that Poetry, Music (which Gosson had also attacked), and even the theatre, are not bad things. But he hardly attempts any independent justification of them as good ones, especially from the purely literary point of view. In fact, his pamphlet—though interesting as critical work from the associate of great creators in drama, himself a delightful minor poet and no contemptible pioneer of English prose fiction—is merely one of the earliest adaptations in English of an unreal defence to an attack, logically as unreal though actually dangerous. The charlatan-geniuses of the Renaissance, with Cornelius Agrippa[1] at their head, had refurbished the Platonic arguments for the sincere but pestilent reformers of the Puritan type. Lodge and his likes, in all countries from Italy outwards and from Boccaccio downward, accept the measure of the shadowy daggers of their opponents, and attempt to meet them with weapons

[1] *V. supra*, p. 28.

of similar temper. The only reality of the debate is in its accidents, not in its main purport. But the assailants, in England at least, had for the time an unfair advantage, because the defence could point to no great poet but Chaucer. The real answer was being provided by one of themselves in the shape of *The Faerie Queene.*

Sidney's Apology for Poetry.

Sidney's book, though pervaded by the same delusion, is one of far more importance. It is not free from faults—in fact, it has often been pointed out that some of Sidney's doctrines, if they had been accepted, would have made the best efforts of Elizabethan literature abortive. But the defects of detail, of which more presently, are mixed with admirable merits; the critic shows himself able, as Gosson had not been able, to take a wide and catholic, instead of a peddling and pettifogging, view of morality. Instead of merely stringing authorities together like Lodge, he uses authority indeed, but abuses it not; and while not neglecting form he does not give exclusive attention to it.

His main object, indeed (though he does not know it), is the defence, not so much of Poetry as of Romance. He follows the ancients in extending the former term to any prose fiction: but it is quite evident that he would have, in his *mimesis*, a quality of imagination which Aristotle nowhere insists upon, and which is in the best sense Romantic. And of this poetry, or romance, he makes one of the loftiest conceptions possible. All the hyperboles of philosophers or of poets, on order, justice, harmony, and the like, are heaped upon Poetry herself, and all the Platonic objections to her are retorted or denied.[1]

It has been said that there is no direct reference to Gosson

[1] Our two chief English-writing authorities, Mr Symonds and Mr Spingarn, are at odds as to Sidney's indebtedness to the Italians. He quotes them but sparingly — Petrarch, Boccaccio, Landino, among the older writers, Fracastoro and Scaliger alone, I think, of the moderns—and Mr Symonds thought that he owed them little or nothing. Mr Spingarn, on the other hand, represents him as following them all in general, and Minturno in particular. As usual, it is a case of the gold and silver shield. My own reading of the Italian writers of 1530-80 leaves me in no doubt that Sidney knew them, or some of them, pretty well. But his *attitude* is very different from theirs as a whole, and already significant of some specially English characteristics in criticism.

in the *Apology*, though the indirect references are fairly clear. *Abstract of it.* Sidney begins (in the orthodox Platonic or Ciceronian manner) somewhat off his subject, by telling how the right virtuous Edward Wotton, and he himself, once at the Emperor's Court learnt horsemanship of John Pietro Pugliano, the Imperial Equerry, and recounting with pleasant irony some magnifying of his office by that officer. Whence, by an equally pleasant rhetorical turn, he slips into a defence of *his* office—his "unelected vocation" of poet. Were not the earliest and greatest authors of all countries, Musæus, Homer, Hesiod, in Greece (not to mention Orpheus and Linus), Livius Andronicus and Ennius among the Romans, Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch in Italy, Chaucer and Gower for "our English"—were they not all poets? Even the philosophers in Greece used poetry, and Plato himself is a poet almost against his will. Herodotus called his nine books after the Muses; and he and all historians have stolen or usurped things of poetry. Wales, Ireland, "the most barbarous and simple Indians," are cited. Nay, further, did not the Romans call a poet *vates*, a "prophet"? and, by presumption, may we not call David's psalms a divine poem? Whatever some may think,[1] it is no profanation to do so. For what is a poet? What do we mean by adopting that Greek title for him? We mean that he is a *maker*. All other arts and sciences limit themselves to nature; the poet alone transcends it, improves it, makes, nay, brings it ("let it not be deemed too saucy a comparison") in some sort into competition with the Creator Himself whom he imitates.

The kinds of this imitation are then surveyed—"Divine," "Philosophical," and that of the third or right sort, who only imitate to invent and improve, which neither divine nor philosophic poets can do. These classes are subdivided according to their matter—heroic, tragic, comic, &c.—or according to the sorts of verses they liked best to write in, "for, indeed, the greatest part of poets have apparelled their poetical inventions in that numerous kind of writing which is called verse—indeed but apparelled, verse being but an ornament and no cause to poetry." And again, "it is not rhyming and versing that

[1] Savonarola, *v. sup.*, p. 20.

maketh a poet." Xenophon and Heliodorus were both poets in prose.

Now let us "weigh this latter part of poetry first by works and then by parts," having regard always to the "Architectonice or mistress-knowledge," the knowledge of a man's self, ethically and politically. Philosophy, history, law, &c., are then "weighed" against poetry at some length: and the judgment of Aristotle that Poetry is *philosophoteron* and *spoudaioteron* than history, is affirmed chiefly on the odd ground of poetical justice,—the right always triumphing in poetry though not in fact. Instances of the moral and political uses of poetry follow. Then for the parts. Pastoral, comedy, tragedy, &c., are by turns surveyed and defended; and it is in the eulogy of lyric that the famous sentence about *Chevy Chase*[1] occurs. After this, and after a stately vindication of Poetry's right to the laurel, he turns to the objections of the objectors. Although repeating the declaration that "rhyming and versing make not poetry," he argues that if they *were* inseparable,[2] verse is the most excellent kind of writing, far better than prose. As to the abuses of poetry, they are but abuses, and do not take away the use, as is proved by a great number of stock examples.

Why, then, has England grown so hard a stepmother to poets? They are bad enough as a rule, no doubt; though Chaucer did excellently considering his time. The *Mirror for Magistrates* is good; so is Surrey; and *The Shepherd's Calendar* "hath much poetry," though "the old rustic language" is bad, since neither Theocritus, nor Virgil, nor Sannazar has it. And what is the reason of our inferiority? The neglect of rule. From this point onwards Sidney certainly "exposes his legs to the arrows" of those who ignore the just historic estimate. He pours ridicule on all our tragedies except *Gorboduc*, and still more on our mongrel tragi-comedies. We must follow the Unities, which, as it is, are neglected even in *Gorboduc*, "how much more in all the rest?" Whence he proceeds (uncon-

[1] "I must confess my own barbarousness: I never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas that I found not my heart moved more than with a trumpet."

[2] "As indeed it seemeth Scaliger judgeth."

scious how cool the *reductio ad absurdum* will leave us) to the famous ridicule of "Asia on the one side and Africa on the other," of "three ladies walking to gather flowers," and how the same place which was a garden becomes a rock, and then a cave with a monster, and then a battlefield with two armies—of the course of two lives in two hours' space, &c. And he concludes with some remarks on versification, which we should gladly have seen worked out. For he does not now seem to be in that antagonistic mood towards rhyme which Spenser's letters to Harvey discover in him. On the contrary, he admits *two* styles, ancient and modern, the former depending on quantity, the latter depending on "number," accent, and rhyme. He indeed thinks English fit for both sorts, and denies "neither sweetness nor majesty" to rhyme, but is, like almost all his contemporaries and followers (except Gascoigne partially), in a fog as to "numbers" and cæsura. The actual end comes a very little abruptly by an exhortation of some length, half humorous, half serious, to all and sundry, to be "no more to jest at the reverent title of a rhymer."

Its minor shortcomings

The importance of this manifesto, both symptomatically and typically, can hardly be exaggerated. It exposes the temper of the generation which actually produced the first-fruits of the greatest Elizabethan poetry; it served as a stimulant and encouragement to all the successive generations of the great age. That Sidney makes mistakes both in gross and detail—that he even makes some rather serious mistakes from the mere "point of view of the examiner"—is of course undeniable. He has a good deal of the merely traditional mode of Renaissance respect for classical—and for some modern—authority. That, for instance, there is a good deal to be said, and that not only from the point of view of Ben Jonson, against Spenser's half-archaic half-rustic dialect in the *Calendar*, few would refuse to grant. But Theocritus *did* use dialect: it would not in the least matter whether either he or Virgil did not; and if it did, what has the modern and partly vernacular name of Sannazar to do with the matter? It can only be replied that Spenser, by permitting "E. K.'s" annotation, did much to invite this sort of criticism; and that Englishmen's re-

luctance to rely on the inherent powers of the English language was partly justified (for hardly any dead poet but Chaucer and no dead prose-writers but Malory and perhaps Berners deserved the title of "great"), partly came from very pardonable ignorance.

It has been already observed that Sidney is by no means peremptory about the "new versifying"; and in particular has absolutely none of the craze against rhyme as rhyme which animated persons of every degree of ability, from Milton to Stanyhurst, during more than a century. His remarks on versification are, however, too scanty to need much comment.

and major heresies.

There remain his two major heresies, the declaration that verse is not inseparable from poetry, and the denunciation of tragi-comedy. In both the authority of the ancients must again bear good part of the blame, but in both he has additional excuses. As to the "pestilent heresy of prose poetry," he is at least not unwilling to argue on the hypothesis that verse *were* necessary to poetry, though he does not think it is. He is quite sure that verse is anyhow a nobler medium than prose. As for the plays, there is still more excuse for him. His classical authorities were quite clear on the point; and as yet there was nothing to be quoted on the other side—at least in English. Spanish had indeed already made the experiment of tragi-comic and anti-unitarian treatment; but I do not think any of the best Spanish examples had yet appeared, and there is great difference between the two theatres. In English itself not one single great or even good play certainly existed on the model at Sidney's death; and, from what we have of what did exist, we can judge how the rough verse, the clumsy construction, or rather absence of construction, the entire absence of clear character-projection, and the higgledy-piggledy of huddled horrors and horseplay, must have shocked a taste delicate in itself and nursed upon classical and Italian literature.

The excuses of both,

And it is noteworthy that even *Gorboduc*, with all its regularity and "Senecation," does not bribe Sidney to overlook at least some of its defects. He is here, as elsewhere,—as indeed throughout,—neither blind nor bigoted. He is only in the position of a man very imperfectly supplied with actual experiments and observations, confronted

with a stage of creative production but just improving from a very bad state, and relying on old and approved methods as against new ones which had as yet had no success.

and their ample compensation.

And had his mistakes been thrice what they are, the tone and temper of his tractate would make us forgive them three times over. That "moving of his heart as with a trumpet" communicates itself to his reader even now, and shows us the motion in the heart of the nation at large that was giving us the *Faerie Queene*, that was to give us *Hamlet* and *As You Like It*. What though the illustrations sometimes make us smile? that the praise of the moral and political effects of poetry may sometimes turn the smile into a laugh or a sigh? Poetry after all, like all other human things, has a body and a soul. The body must be fashioned by art—perhaps the body *is* art; but the soul is something else. The best poetry will not come without careful consideration of form and subject, of kind and style; but it will not necessarily come with this consideration. There must be the inspiration, the enthusiasm, the *afflatus*, the glow; and they are here in Sidney's tractate. Nor must we fail to draw attention, once more, to the difference of the English critical spirit here shown as regards both Italian and French.

King James's Reulis and Cautelis.

In the decade which followed,[1] three notable books of English criticism appeared, none of them exhibiting Sidney's *afflatus*, but all showing the interest felt in the subject, and one exceeding in method, and at least attempted range, anything that English had known, or was to know, for more than a century. These were King James the First's (as yet only "the Sixth's") *Reulis and Cautelis to be observit and eschewit in Scottis Poesie*, 1585; William Webbe's *Discourse of English Poesie*, next year; and the anonymous *Arte of English Poesie*, which appeared in 1589, and which (on rather weak evidence, but with no counter-claimant) is usually attributed to George Puttenham.[2]

[1] It may be desirable to note that Sidney's book, though very well known, as was the wont then, in MS., to all who cared to know, was never printed till 1595, nearly ten years after the author's death.

[2] All three are included in Mr Arber's *Reprints*, where the desirable, or desired, biographical and bibliographical apparatus will be duly found.

The first is the slightest; but it is interesting for more than its authorship. It was attached to James's *Essays of a Prentice in the Divine Art*, of which it gives some rules: it shows that Buchanan had taken pains with his pupil; and it also exhibits that slightly scholastic and "peddling," but by no means unreal, shrewdness and acumen which distinguished the British Solomon in his happier moments. It is characteristic that James is not in the least afraid of the charge of attending to mint, anise, and cumin. He plunges without any rhetorical exordium into what he calls "just colours"—do not rhyme on the same syllable, see that your rhyme is on accented syllables only, do not let your first or last word exceed two or three syllables at most. This dread of polysyllables, so curious to us, was very common at the time: it was one of the things from which Shakespeare's silent sovereignty delivered us by such touches of spell-dissolving mastery as

"The multitudinous seas incarnadine."

Then he passes to feet, of which he practically allows only the iamb; while he very oddly gives the word "foot" to the syllable, not the combination of syllables; and lays down the entirely arbitrary rule that the number of "feet"—*i.e.*, syllables—must be even, not odd. There is to be a sharp section ("cæsura") in the middle of every line, long or short; and the difference of long, short, and "indifferent" (common) feet or syllables is dwelt upon, with its influence of "flowing," as the King calls rhythm. Cautions on diction follow, and some against commonplaces, which look as if the royal prentice had read Gascoigne, a suggestion confirmed elsewhere.[1] Invention is briefly touched; and the tract finishes with a short account of the kinds of verse: "rhyme"—*i.e.*, the heroic couplet, "quhilk servis onely for lang historieis"; a heroical stanza of nine lines, rhymed *aabaabbab; ottava rima*, which he calls "ballat royal"; rhyme royal, which he calls "Troilus verse"; "rouncifals," or "tumbling verse" (doggerel alliterative, with bob and wheel); sonnets; "common" verse (octosyllable couplets); "all kinds of broken or cuttit verse," &c.

The tract is, as has been said, interesting, because it is an

[1] It is, however, excessive to represent James as a mere copyist of Gascoigne.

honest, and by no means unintelligent, attempt to make an English prosody, with special reference to a dialect which had done great things in its short day, but which had been specially affected—not to say specially disorganised—by the revived and bastard alliteration of the fifteenth century. Probably it was the study of French (where the iamb had long been the only foot) which, quite as much as mere following of Gascoigne, induced James to extend that crippling limitation to English; and the same influence may be seen in his insistence on the hard-and-fast section. These things (the latter of which at least rather endeared him to Dr Guest)[1] are, of course, quite wrong; but they express the genuine and creditable desire of the time to impose some order on the shambling doggerel of the generation or two immediately preceding. We find the same tendency even in Spenser, as far as rigid dissyllabic feet and sections are concerned; and it is certainly no shame for the Royal prentice to follow, though unknowing, the master and king of English poetry at the time when he wrote.

Webbe's Discourse.

One would not, however, in any case have expected from James evidence of the root of the matter in poetry. There is more of this root, though less scholarship and also more "craze," in the obscure William Webbe, of whom we know practically nothing except that he was a Cambridge man, a friend of Robert Wilmot (the author of *Tancred and Gismund*) and private tutor to the sons of Edward Sulyard of Flemyngs, an Essex squire. The young Sulyards must have received some rather dubious instruction in the classics, for Webbe, in his inevitable classical exordium, thinks that Pindar was older than Homer, and that Horace came after—apparently a good while after—Ovid, and about the same time as Juvenal and Persius. He was, however, really and deeply interested in English verse; and his enthusiasm for Spenser—"the new poet," "our late famous poet," "the mightiest English poet that ever lived," is, if not in every case quite according to knowledge, absolutely right on the whole, and very pleasant and

[1] Who also caught at James's "tumbling verse" as a convenient stigmatisation for the true English equivalenced liberty.

refreshing to read. It is, indeed, the first thing of the kind that we meet with in English; for the frequent earlier praises of Chaucer are almost always long after date, always uncritical, and for the most part[1] much rather expressions of a conventional tradition than of the writer's deliberate preference.

It was Webbe's misfortune, rather than his fault, that, like his idol (but without that idol's resipiscence), and, like most loyal Cambridge men, with the examples of Watson, Ascham, and Drant before them, he was bitten with "the new versifying." It was rather his fault than his misfortune that he seems to have taken very little pains to acquaint himself with the actual performance of English poetry. Even of Gower he speaks as though he only knew him through the references of Chaucer and others: though three editions of the *Confessio*—Caxton's one and Berthelette's two—were in print in his time. His notice of Chaucer himself is curiously vague, and almost limited to his powers as a satirist, while he has, what must seem to most judges,[2] the astonishing idea of discovering "good proportion of verse and meetly current style" in Lydgate, though he reproves him for dealing with "superstitious and odd matters." That he thinks *Piers Plowman* later than Lydgate is unlucky, but not quite criminal. He had evidently read it —indeed the book, from its kinship in parts to the Protestant, not to say the Puritan, spirit, appealed to Elizabethan tastes, and Crowley had already printed two editions of it, Rogers a third. But he makes upon it the extraordinary remark, "The first I have seen that observed the quantity of our verse without the curiosity of rhyme." What Webbe here means by "quantity," or whether he had any clear deliberate meaning at all, it is impossible to see: it is needless to say that Langland is absolutely non-quantitative in the ordinary sense, that if "quantity" means number of syllables he observes none,

Slight in knowledge,

[1] Occleve—no genius, but a true man enough—deserves exception perhaps best.

[2] The Germans—in this, as in other matters, more hopelessly to seek in English now than, *teste* Porson, they were a century ago in Greek—have followed Webbe, as indeed Warton had strangely done; and of course some Englishmen have followed the Germans. Lydgate himself knew better, though some of the shorter poems attributed to him are metrically, as well as in other ways, not contemptible.

and that he can be scanned only on the alliterative-accentual system. For Gascoigne Webbe relies on "E. K."; brackets "the divers works of the old Earl of Surrey" with a dozen others; is copious on Phaer, Golding, &c., and mentions George Whetstone and Anthony Munday in words which would be adequate for Sackville (who is not named), and hardly too low for Spenser; while Gabriel Harvey is deliberately ranked with Spenser himself. Yet these things, rightly valued, are not great shame to Webbe. If he borrows from "E. K." some scorn of the "ragged rout of rakehell rhymers," and adds more of his own, he specifies nobody; and his depreciation is only the defect which almost necessarily accompanies the quality of his enthusiasm.

but enthusiastic,

His piece, though not long, is longer than those of Gascoigne, Sidney, and King James. After a dedication (not more than excusably laudatory) to his patron Sulyard, there is a curious preface to "The Noble Poets of England," who, if they had been inclined to be censorious, might have replied that Master Webbe, while complimenting them, went about to show that the objects of his compliment did not exist. "It is," he says, "to be wondered of all, and is lamented of many, that, while all other studies are used eagerly, only Poetry has found fewest friends to amend it." We have "as sharp and quick wits" in England as ever were Greeks and Romans: our tongue is neither coarse nor harsh, as she has already shown. All that is wanted is "some perfect platform or Prosodia of versifying: either in imitation of Greeks and Latins, or with necessary alterations. So, if the Noble Poets would "look so low from their divine cogitations, and "run over the simple censure" of Master Webbe's "weak brain," something might, perhaps, be done.

if uncritical,

The treatise itself begins with the usual etymological definition of poetry, as "making," and the usual comments on the word "Vates"; but almost immediately digresses into praise of our late famous English poet who wrote the *Shepherd's Calendar* and a wish to see his "English Poet" (mentioned by E. K.), which, alas! none of us have ever seen. This is succeeded, first by the classical and then by

the English historical sketches, which have been commented upon. It ends with fresh laudation of Spenser.

Webbe then turns to the general consideration of poetry (especially from the allegoric-didactic point of view), subject, kinds, &c.; and it is to be observed that, though he several times cites Aristotle, he leans much more on Horace, and on Elyot's translations from him and other Latins. He then proceeds to a rather unnecessarily elaborate study of the *Æneid*, with large citations both from the original and from Phaer's translation, after which he returns once more to Spenser, and holds him up as at least the equal of Virgil and Theocritus. Indeed the *Calendar* is practically his theme all through, though he diverges from and embroiders upon it. Then, after glancing amiably enough at Tusser, and mentioning a translation of his own of the *Georgics*, which has got into the hands of some piratical publisher, he attacks the great rhyme-question, to which he has, from the Preface onwards, more than once alluded. Much of what he says is borrowed, or a little advanced, from Ascham; but Webbe is less certain about the matter than his master, and again diverges into a consideration of divers English metres, always illustrated, where possible, from the *Calendar*. Still harking back again, he decides that "the true kind of versifying" might have been effected in English: though (as Campion, with better wits, did after him) he questions whether some alteration of the actual Greek and Latin forms is not required. He gives a list of classical feet (fairly correct, except that he makes the odd confusion of a trochee and a tribrach), and discusses the liberties which must be taken with English to adjust it to some of them. Elegiacs, he thinks, will not do: Hexameters and Sapphics go best. And, to prove this, he is rash enough to give versions of his own, in the former metre, of Virgil's first and second eclogues, in the latter of Spenser's beautiful

"Ye dainty nymphs that in this blessed brook."

It is enough to say that he succeeds in stripping all three of every rag of poetry. A translation of Fabricius'[1] prose sylla-

[1] *V. infra*, p. 354.

bus of Horace's rules, gathered not merely out of the *Ep. ad Pisones* but elsewhere, and an "epilogue," modest as to himself, sanguine as to what will happen when "the rabble of bald rhymes is turned to famous works," concludes the piece.

in appreciation.

On the whole, to use the hackneyed old phrase once more, we could have better spared a better critic than Webbe, who gives us—in a fashion invaluable to map-makers of the early exploration of English criticism—the workings of a mind furnished with no original genius for poetry, and not much for literature, not very extensively or accurately erudite, but intensely *interested* in matters literary, and especially in matters poetical, generously enthusiastic for such good things as were presented to it, not without some mother-wit even in its crazes, and encouraged in those crazes not, as in Harvey's case, by vanity, pedantry, and bad taste, but by its very love of letters. Average dispositions of this kind were, as a rule, diverted either into active life—very much for the good of the nation—or—not at all for its good—into the acrid disputes of hot-gospelling and Puritanism. Webbe, to the best of his modest powers, was a devotee of literature: for which let him have due honour.

Puttenham's (?) Art of English Poesie.

Puttenham—or whosoever else it was, if it was not Puttenham[1]—has some points of advantage, and one great one of disadvantage, in comparison with Webbe. In poetical faculty there is very little to choose between them—the abundant specimens of his own powers, which the author of *The Art of English Poesie* gives (and which are eked out by a late copy of one of the works referred to, *Partheniades*), deserve the gibes they receive in one of our scanty early notices of the book, that by Sir John Harington (*v. infra*). On the other hand, Puttenham has very little of that engaging enthusiasm which atones for

[1] The whole of the documents in the case will be found, clearly put, in Mr Arber's *Introduction*. The first attribution is in Bolton (*v. infra*) some fifteen years later than the date of the book, and not quite positive ("as the Fame is"). But there is no other claimant who has anything to put in: and the almost diseased aversion of "persons of quality" (Puttenham was possibly a nephew of Sir Thomas Elyot's, and a Gentleman-Pensioner of the Queen's) to avowing authorship is well known.

so much in his contemporary. But this very want of enthusiasm somewhat prepares us for, though it need not necessarily accompany, merits which we do not find in Webbe, considered as a critic. *The Art of English Poesy*, which, as has been said, appeared in 1589, three years later than Webbe's, but which, from some allusions, may have been written, or at least begun, before it, and which, from other allusions, must have been the work of a man well advanced in middle life, is methodically composed, very capable in range and plan, and supported with a by no means contemptible erudition, and no inconsiderable supply of judgment and common-sense. It was unfortunate for Puttenham that he was just a little too old: that having been—as from a fairly precise statement of his he must have been—born *cir.* 1530-35, he belonged to the early and uncertain generation of Elizabethan men of letters, the Googes and Turbervilles, and Gascoignes, not to the generation of Sidney and Spenser, much less to that of Shakespeare and Jonson. But what he had he gave: and it is far from valueless.

Its erudition.

The book is "to-deled" (as the author of the *Ancren Riwle* would say) into three books—"Of Poets and Poesie," "Of Proportion," and "Of Ornament." It begins, as usual, with observations on the words poet and maker, references to the ancients, &c.; but this exordium, which is fitly written in a plain but useful and agreeable style, is commendably short. The writer lays it down, with reasons, that there may be an Art of English as of Latin and Greek poetry; but cannot refrain from the same sort of "writing at large" as to poets being the first philosophers, &c., which we have so often seen.[1] Indeed we must lay our account with the almost certain fact that all writers of this period had seen Sidney's *Defence* at least in MS. or had heard of it. He comes closer to business with his remarks on the irreption of rhyme into Greek and Latin poetry; and shows a better knowledge of leonine and other mediæval Latin verse, not merely than Webbe, but even than Ascham. A very long section then deals with the question—all-interesting to a man of the Renaissance—in what

[1] Harington, a person of humour, and a typical Englishman, perstringes this as well as other things in his fling at the *Art*.

reputation poets were with princes of old, and how they be now contemptible (wherein Puttenham shows a rather remarkable acquaintance with modern European literature), and then turns to the subject or matter of poesy and the forms thereof, handling the latter at great length, and with a fair sprinkle of literary anecdote. At last he comes to *English* poetry; and though, as we might expect, he does not go behind the late fourteenth century, he shows rather more knowledge than Webbe and (not without slips here and elsewhere) far more comparative judgment. It must, however, be admitted that, engaging as is his description of Sir Walter Raleigh's "vein most lofty, insolent, and passionate," he does not show to advantage in the patronising glance in passing at "that other gentleman who wrote the late *Shepherd's Calendar*," contrasted with the description of the Queen our Sovereign lady, "whose Muse easily surmounteth all the rest in any kind on which it may please her Majesty to employ her pen." But here the allowance comes in: the stoutest Tory of later days can never wholly share, though he may remotely comprehend, the curious mixture of religious, romantic, patriotic, amatory, and interested feelings with which the men of the sixteenth century wrote about Gloriana.

Systematic arrangement

The second book deals with Proportion, in which word Puttenham includes almost everything belonging to Prosody in its widest sense—staff, stanza, measure, metres, and feet, "cæsure," rhyme, accent, cadence, situation (by which he means the arrangement of the rhymes), and proportion in figure. On most of these heads he speaks more or less in accordance with his fellows (though he very noticeably abstains from extreme commendation or condemnation of rhyme), save that, for the moment, he seems to neglect the "new versifying." It is, however, but for a moment. After his chapters on "proportion" in figure (the fanciful egg, wheel, lozenge, &c., which he himself argues for, and which were to make critics of the Addisonian type half-angry and half-sad), he deals with the subject.

About this "new versifying" he is evidently in two minds. He had glanced at it before (and refers to the glance

now)[1] as "a nice and scholastic curiosity." However, "for the information of our young makers, and pleasure to those who be delighted in novelty, *and to the intent that we may not seem by ignorance or oversight to omit*,"[2] he "will now deal with it." Which he does at great length; and, at any rate sometimes, with a clearer perception of the prosodic values than any other, even Spenser, had yet shown. But he does not seem quite at home in the matter, and glides off to a discussion of feet—classical feet—in the usual rhymed English verse.

and exuberant indulgence in Figures.

The third book is longer than the first and second put together, and is evidently that in which the author himself took most pleasure. It is called "Of Ornament," but practically deals with the whole question of *lexis* or style, so that it is at least common to Rhetoric and Poetics. In one respect, too, it belongs more specially to the former, in that it contains the most elaborate treatment of rhetorical figures to be found, up to its time, in English literature. Full eighty pages are occupied with the catalogue of these "Figures Auricular" wherein Puttenham (sometimes rather badly served by his pen or his printer) ransacks the Greek rhetoricians, and compiles a list (with explanations and examples) of over one hundred and twenty. It is preceded and followed by more general remarks, of which some account must be given.

Beginning with an exordial defence of ornament in general, Puttenham proceeds to argue that set speeches, as in Parliament, not merely may but ought to be couched in something more than a conversational style. This added grace must be given by (1) Language, (2) Style, (3) Figures. On diction he has remarks both shrewd and interesting, strongly commending the language of the Court and of the best citizens, not pro-

[1] Here as elsewhere we may note evidences of possible revision in the book. That there was some such revision is certain; for instance, Ben Jonson's copy (the existence of which is not uninteresting) contains a large cancel of four leaves, not found in other copies known. For this and other points of the same kind, see Mr Arber's edition.

[2] "Reviewing" was as yet in its infancy—a curiously lively one though, with Nash and others coming on. Puttenham seems to have understood its little ways rather well.

vincial speech, or that of seaports, or of universities, or in other ways merely technical. "The usual speech of the Court and that of London and the shires lying about London, within ten miles and not much above" is his norm. There is also a noteworthy and very early reference to English dictionaries, and a cautious section on neologisms introduced from other tongues to fill wants. Style he will have reached by "a constant and continual tenor of writing," and gives the usual subdivision of high, low, and middle. And so to his Figures.

The details and illustrations of the long catalogue of these invite comment, but we must abstain therefrom. When the list is finished, Puttenham returns to his generalities with a discussion of the main principle of ornament, which he calls *Decorum* or "Decency," dividing and illustrating the kinds of it into choice of subject, diction, delivery, and other things, not without good craftsmanship, and with a profusion of anecdotes chiefly of the Helotry kind. He then (rather oddly, but not out of keeping with his classical models) has a chapter of decorum in behaviour, turns to the necessity of concealing art, and ends with a highly flattering conclusion to the Queen.

We have yet to mention some minorities; less briefly, the two champions—Campion and Daniel, who brought the question of "Rhyme *v.* 'Verse'" to final arbitrament of battle; the great name (not so great here as elsewhere) of Francis Bacon; and lastly, one who, if representative of a further stage, is far the greatest of Elizabethan critics, and perhaps the only English critic who deserves the adjective great before Dryden.

Minors: Harington, Meres, Webster, Bolton, &c.

The earliest (1591) of these is Sir John Harington, in the prefatory matter[1] of his translation of the *Orlando*, which contains the gibe at Puttenham above referred to. It is otherwise much indebted to Sidney, from whom, however, Harington differs in allowing more scope to allegorical interpretation. Then comes Francis

[1] Reprinted by Haslewood. Whetstone's Preface to *Promos and Cassandra* (1578) and A. Fraunce's *Arcadian Rhetoric* (1588) are earlier still. The former anticipates Sidney in objecting to the irregularity of English plays: the latter is a strong partisan of classical metres, his practice in which is sufficiently roughly treated by Ben Jonson in his *Conversations*, *v. infra*, p. 199.

Meres, whose *Palladis Tamia*[1] (1598) is to be eternally mentioned with gratitude, because it gives us our one real document about the order of Shakespeare's plays, but is quite childish in the critical characterisation which it not uninterestingly attempts. Webster's equally famous, and universally known, epitheting of the work of Shakespeare and others in the Preface to *The White Devil* (1612) adds yet another instance of the short sight of contemporaries; but tempting as it may be to comment on these, it would not become a Historian of Criticism to do so in this context. Sir W. Vaughan in *The Golden Grove* (1600) had earlier dealt, and Bolton[2] in his *Hypercritica* (1616), and Peacham in his *Complete Gentleman* (1622), were later to deal, with Poetry, but in terms adding nothing to, and probably borrowed from, the utterances of Sidney, Webbe, and Puttenham. Their contributions are "sma' sums," as Bailie Nicol Jarvie says, and we must neglect them.

Campion and his Observations.

The most interesting literary result of the "new versifying" craze is to be found, without doubt, in the *Observations in the Art of English Poesy* of Thomas Campion[3] and the subsequent *Defence of Rhyme* of Samuel Daniel. The former was issued in 1602, and the latter still later; —that is to say more than twenty years after Spenser's and Harvey's letters, and more than thirty after the appearance—let alone the writing—of Ascham's *Schoolmaster*. In the interval the true system of English prosody had put itself practically beyond all real danger; but the critical craze had never received its quietus. Nay, it survived to animate Milton: and there are persons whom we could only name for the sake of honour, and who do not seem to see that it is dead even yet. Both the writers mentioned were true poets: and

[1] Reprinted (in its critical section) by Mr Arber, *English Garner*, ii. 94 *sq.*

[2] Bolton's criticism of his contemporaries is extracted in Warton (iv. 204 *sq.*, ed. Hazlitt). The writer, who is dealing with History, and speaking directly of language, disallows most of Spenser (excepting the *Hymns*) and all Chaucer, Lydgate, Langland, and Skelton, can "endure" Gascoigne, praises Elizabeth and James (of course), Chapman, Daniel, Drayton, Constable, Southwell, Sackville, Surrey, Wyatt, Raleigh, Donne, and Greville, but gives the palm for "vital, judicious, and practicable" language to Jonson.

[3] Ed. Bullen, *Works of Dr Thomas Campion*, London, 1889.

the curious thing is that the more exquisitely romantic poet of the two was the partisan of classical prosody. But Campion—who dedicated his book to Lord Buckhurst, the *doyen* (except poor old Churchyard) of English poetry at the time, and one whose few but noble exercises in it need hardly vail their crest to any contemporary poetry but Spenser's and Shakespeare's—was far too wise a man, as well as far too good a poet, to champion any longer the break-neck and break-jaw hexameters of Harvey and Stanyhurst. We have seen that almost from the first there had been questions of heart among the partisans of the New Versifying. That English is not tolerant of dactyls—that the dactyl, do what you will, in English, will tilt itself into an anapæst with an anacrusis—is a truth which no impartial student of metre with an ear, and with an eye to cover the history of English poetry, can deny. Some even of these pioneers had seen this: Campion has the boldness to declare it in the words, "It [the dactylic hexameter] is an attempt altogether against the nature of our language." But though he was bold so far, he was not quite bold enough. He could not surmount the queer Renaissance objection to rhyme. That all the arguments against the "barbarism" of this tell equally against Christianity, chivalry, the English constitution, the existence of America, gunpowder, glass-windows, coal-fires, and a very large number of other institutions of some usefulness, never seems to have occurred to any of these good folk. But no man can escape his time. Campion, not noticing, or not choosing to notice, the intensely English quality of the anapæst, limits, or almost limits, our verse to iambs and trochees. It was possible for him—though it still appears to be difficult for some—to recognise the tribrach, the mere suggestion of which in English verse threw Dr Guest into a paroxysm of "! ! ! !'s," but which exists as certainly as does the iamb itself. On the contrary he shows himself in advance of Guest, and of most behind Guest to his own time, by admitting tribrachs in the third and fifth places. Nay, he even sees that a trochee may take the place of an iamb (Milton's probably borrowed secret) in the first place, though his unerring ear (I think there is no verse of Campion's that is unmusical) insists on some other foot

than an iamb following — otherwise, he says, "it would too much *drink up* the verse." But, on the whole, he sets himself to work, a self-condemned drudge, to make iambic and trochaic verses without rhyme. And on these two, with certain licences, he arranges schemes of English elegiacs, anacreontics, and the rest. Some of the examples of these are charming poems, notably the famous "*Rose-Cheeked Laura*," and the beautiful "*Constant to None*," while Campion's subsequent remarks on English quantity are among the acutest on the subject. But the whole thing has on it the curse of "flying in the face of nature." You have only to take one of Campion's own poems (written mostly *after* the *Observations*) in natural rhyme, and the difference will be seen at once. It simply comes to this—that the good rhymeless poems would be infinitely better with rhyme, and that the bad ones, while they might sometimes be absolutely saved by the despised invention of Huns and Vandals, are always made worse by its absence.

Daniel and his Defence of Rhyme.

In the preface of Daniel's answering *Defence of Rhyme to all the worthy lovers and learned professors* [*thereof*] *within His Majesty's dominions*,[1] he says that he wrote it "about a year since," upon the "great reproach" given by Campion, and some give it the date of 1603 or even 1602; but Dr Grosart's reprint is dated five years later. The learned gentleman to whom it was specially written was no less a person than William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, whom some of us (acknowledging that the matter is no matter) do not yet give up as "Mr W. H." The advocate affects, with fair rhetorical excuse (though of course he must have known that the craze was nearly half a century old, and had at least not been discouraged by his patron's uncle nearly a generation before), to regard the attack on rhyming as something new, as merely concerned with the "measures" of Campion. Daniel, always a gentleman, deals handsomely with his antagonist, whom he does not name, but describes as "this detractor whose commendable rhymes, albeit now an enemy to rhyme, have given heretofore to the world the best notice of his worth," and as a man "of fair parts and good reputation." And having put

[1] Chalmers's *Poets*, iii. 551-560; Grosart's *Works of Samuel Daniel*, iv. 29-67.

himself on the best ground, in this way, from the point of view of morals and courtesy, he does the same in matter of argument by refusing to attack Campion's "numbers" in themselves ("We could," he says well, "have allowed of his numbers, had he not graced his rhymes"), and by seizing the unassailable position given by custom and nature—"Custom that is before all law; Nature that is above all art." In fact, not Jonson himself, and certainly none else before Jonson, has comprehended, or at least put, the truth of the matter as Daniel puts it, that arbitrary laws imposed on the poetry of any nation are absurd—that the verse of a language is such as best consorts with the nature of that language. This seems a truism enough perhaps; but it may be very much doubted whether all critics recognise it, and its consequences, even at the present day. And it is certain that we may search other early English critics in vain for a frank recognition of it. With an equally bold and sure foot he strides over the silly stuff about "invention of barbarous ages" and the like. Whatever its origin (and about this he shows a wise carelessness), it is "an excellence added to this work of measure and harmony, far happier than any proportion quantity could ever show." It "gives to the ear an echo of a delightful report," and to the memory "a deeper impression of what is delivered." He is less original (as well as, some may think, less happy) in distinguishing the accent of English from the quantity of the classical tongues; but the classicisers before Campion, if not Campion himself, had made such a mess of quantity, and had played such havoc with accent, that he may well be excused. The universality of rhyme is urged, and once more says Daniel (with that happy audacity in the contemning of vain things which belongs to the born exploders of crazes), "If the barbarian likes it, it is because it sways the affections of the barbarian; if civil nations practise it, it works upon their hearts; if all, then it has a power in nature upon all." But it will be said, "Ill customs are to be left." No doubt: but the question is begged. Who made *this* custom "ill"? Rhyme aims at pleasing—and it pleases. Suffer then the world to enjoy that which it knows and what it likes, for all the tyrannical rules of rhetoric cannot make it otherwise. Why are we to be

a mere *servum pecus*, only to imitate the Greeks and Latins? Their way was natural to them: let ours be so to us. "Why should laboursome curiosity still lay affliction on our best delights?" Moreover, to a spirit whom nature hath "fitted for that mystery," rhyme is no impediment, "but rather giveth wings to mount." The necessary historical survey follows, with a surprising and very welcome justification of the Middle Ages against both Classics and Renaissance. "Let us," says this true Daniel come to judgment, "go not further, but look upon the wonderful architecture of the State of England, and see whether they were unlearned times that could give it such a form?" And if politically, why not poetically? Some acute and, in the other sense, rather sharp criticism of Campion's details follows, with a few apologetic remarks for mixture of masculine and feminine rhymes on his own part: and the whole concludes in an admirable peroration with a great end-note to it. Not easily shall we find, either in Elizabethan times or in any other, a happier combination of solid good sense with eager poetic sentiment, of sound scholarship with wide-glancing intelligence, than in this little tractate of some thirty or forty ordinary pages, which dispelled the delusions of two generations, and made the poetical fortune of England sure.

Bacon.

The contributions of "topmost Verulam" to criticism have sometimes been spoken of with reverence: and it is not uncommon to find, amid the scanty classics of the subject, which until recently have been recommended to the notice of inquirers, not merely a place, but a place of very high honour, assigned to *The Advancement of Learning*. Actual, unprejudiced, and to some extent expert, reference to the works, however, will not find very much to justify this estimate: and, indeed, a little thought, assisted by very moderate knowledge, would suffice to make it rather surprising that Bacon should give us so much, than disappointing that he should give us little or nothing. A producer of literature who at his best has few superiors, and a user of it for purposes of quotation, who would deserve the name of genius for this use alone if he had no other title thereto—Bacon was yet by no means inclined by his main interests and objects, or by his temperament, either towards

great exaltation of letters, or towards accurate and painstaking examination of them. Indeed, it is in him—almost first of all men, certainly first of all great modern men—that we find that partisan opposition between literature and science which has constantly developed since. It is true that his favourite method of examination into "forms" might seem tempting as applied to literature; and that it would, incidentally if not directly, have yielded more solid results than his Will-o'-the-wisp chase of the Form of Heat. But this very craze of his may suggest that if he had undertaken literary criticism it would have been on the old road of Kinds and Figures and Qualities, in which we could expect little but glowing rhetorical generalisation from him.

The Essays.

Nor is the nature of such small critical matter as we actually have from him very different. The Essays practically give us nothing but the contents of that *Of Studies*, a piece too well known to need quotation; too much in the early pregnant style of the author to bear compression or analysis; and too general to repay it. For the critic and the man of letters generally it is, in its own phrase, to be not merely tasted, nor even swallowed, but chewed and digested; yet its teachings have nothing more to do with the critical function of "study" than with all others.

The Advancement of Learning.

The *Advancement*[1] at least excuses the greatness thrust upon it in the estimates above referred to, not merely by the apparent necessity that the author should deal with Criticism, but by a certain appearance of his actually doing so. Comparatively early in the First Book he tackles the attention to style which sprang up at the Renaissance, opening his discussion by the ingenious but slightly unhistorical attribution of it to Martin Luther, who was forced to awake all antiquity, and call former times to his succour, against the Bishop of Rome. Not a few names, for the best part of two centuries before the great cause of *Martinus* v.

[1] It ought to be, but from certain signs perhaps is not, unnecessary to say that the *De Augmentis* is itself no mere Latin version of the *Advancement*, but a large expansion of it. There seems, however, no necessity here to deal with both.

Papam was launched, from Petrarch and Boccaccio to Erasmus and Reuchlin, will put in evidence before the tribunal of chronology against this singular assertion; and though the Italian Humanists of the fifteenth century might not (at least in thought) care anything for the Pope except as a source of donatives and benefices, it is certain that most of them were as constitutionally disinclined to abet Luther as they were chronologically disabled from in any way abetting him. Bacon's argument and further survey are, however, better than this beginning. To understand the ancients (he says justly enough) it was necessary to make a careful study of their language. Further, the opposition of thought to the schoolmen naturally brought about a recoil from the barbarisms of Scholastic style, and the anxiety to win over the general imprinted care and elegance and vigour on preaching and writing. All this, he adds as justly, turned to excess. Men began to "hunt more after words than matter; more after the choiceness of the phrase and the round and clean composition of the sentence, and the sweet falling of the clauses, and the varying and illustration of their words with tropes and figures, than after the weight of matter, worth of subject, soundness of argument, life of invention, or depth of judgment." The Ciceronianism of Osorius, Sturm, "Car of Cambridge," and even Ascham, receives more or less condemnation; and Erasmus is, of course, cited for gibes at it. On this text Bacon proceeds to enlarge in his own stately rhetoric, coolly admitting that it "is a thing not hastily to be condemned, to clothe and adorn the obscurity even of philosophy itself with sensible and plausible elocution." But he very quickly glides off into his usual denunciations of the schoolmen. Nor have I found anything else in this First Book really germane to our purpose; for one cannot cite as such the desultory observations on patronage of literature (among other branches of learning) which fill a good part of it.

Its denunciation of mere word-study.

The Second Book is somewhat more fruitful in quantity, if not very much; but the quality remains not very different. The opening "Address to the King" contains, in an interesting first draft (as we may call it), the everlasting grumble of the

scientific man, that science is not sufficiently endowed, the further grumble at mere book-learning, the cry for the promotion—by putting money in its purse—of research. The Second and Third Chapters contain some plans of books drawn up in Bacon's warm imaginative way, especially a great series of Histories, with the *History of England* for their centre. And then we come, in the Fourth Chapter, to Poesy.

Its view of Poetry.

But except for Bacon's majestic style (which, however, by accident or intention, is rather below itself here) there is absolutely nothing novel. The view (which, as we have seen, all the Elizabethan critics adopted, probably from the Italians)—the view is that poetry is just a part of learning licensed in imagination; a fanciful history intended to give satisfaction to the mind of man in things where history is not; something particularly prevalent and useful in barbarous ages; divisible into narrative, representative and allusive; useful now and then, but (as Aristotle would say) not a thing to take very seriously. Yet poetry, a *vinum dæmonum* at the worst, a mere illusion anyhow, is still, even as such, a refuge from, and remedy for, sorrow and toil. Of its form, as distinguished from its matter, he says,[1] "Poetry is but a character of style, and belongeth to arts of speech, and is not pertinent for the present." He attempts no defence of it as of other parts of learning, because "being as a plant that cometh of the lust of the earth without a formal seed, it hath sprung up and spread abroad more than any other kind." And he turns from it to philosophy, with the more than half-disdainful adieu, "It is not good to stay too long in the theatre."

Some obiter dicta.

We might almost quit him here with a somewhat similar leave-taking; but for his great reputation some other places shall be handled. At XIV. 11 there are some remarks on the delusive powers of words; at XVI. 4, 5 some on grammar and rhetoric, including a rather interesting observation, not sufficiently expanded or worked out, that "in modern languages it seemeth to me as free to make new measures of verses as of dances"; in XVIII. a handling of strictly oratorical rhetoric, with a digression to these "Colours

[1] *Advancement of Learning*, Bk. II. iv.

of Good and Evil" which interested Bacon so much; in XX. another descant on the same art; in XXI. a puff of the *Basilikon Doron;* in XXXII. observations on the moral influence of books; in XXXV. some general observations on literature; and, just before the close, a well-known and often-quoted eulogy, certainly not undeserved, of the eloquence of the English pulpit for forty years past.

The whole of very slight importance.

If it were not for the singular want of a clear conception of literary Criticism, which has prevailed so long and so widely, it would hardly be necessary to take, with any seriousness at all, a man who has no more than this to say on the subject.[1] It is most assuredly no slight to Bacon to deny him a place in a regiment where he never had the least ambition to serve. That he was himself a great practitioner of literature, and so, necessarily if indirectly, a critic of it in his own case, is perfectly true; the remarks which have been quoted above on the Ciceronians show that, when he took the trouble, and found the opportunity, he could make them justly and soundly. But his purpose, his interests, his province, his vein, lay far elsewhere. To him, it is pretty clear, literary expression was, in relation to his favourite studies and dreams, but a higher kind of pen-and-ink or printing-press. He distrusted the stability of modern languages, and feared that studies couched in them might some day or other come to be unintelligible and lost to the world. This famous fear explains the nature and the limits of his interest in literature. It was a vehicle or a treasury, a distributing agent or a guard. Its functions and qualities accorded: it was to be clear, not disagreeable, solidly constructed, intelligible to as large a number of readers as possible. The psychological character and morphological def-

[1] I have more than once said that controversy or polemic in detail with other writers is forbidden here. But those who wish to see what has been said for Bacon will find most of the references in Messrs Gayley and Scott's invaluable book. The panegyrists—from my honoured friend and predecessor, Professor Masson, to Mr Worsfold—all rely on the description of poetry above referred to, as "Feigned History," with what follows on its advantages and on poetical justice, &c. All this seems to me, however admirably expressed, to be obvious and rudimentary to the *x*th and the *n*th.

inition of poetry interested him philosophically. But in the art and the beauty of poetry and literature generally, for their own sakes, he seems to have taken no more interest than he did in the coloured pattern plots in gardens, which he compared to "tarts." To a man so minded, as to those more ancient ones of similar mind whom we have discussed in the first volume, Criticism proper could, at the best, be a pastime to be half ashamed of—a "theatre" in which to while away the hours; it could not possibly be a matter of serious as well as enthusiastic study.

Stirling's Anacrisis.

Between Bacon and Ben may be best noticed the short *Anacrisis or Censure of Poets, Ancient and Modern*,[1] by Sir William Alexander, Earl of Stirling. It has received high praise;[2] but even those who think by no means ill of *Aurora*, may find some difficulty in indorsing this. It is simply a sort of "Note," written, as the author says, to record his impressions during a reading of the poets, which he had undertaken as refreshment after great travail both of body and mind. He thinks Language "but the apparel of poesy," thereby going even further than those who would assign that position to verse, and suggesting a system of "Inarticulate Poetics," which he would have been rather put to it to body forth. He only means, however, that he judges in the orthodox Aristotelian way, by "the fable and contexture." A subsequent comparison of a poem to a garden suggests Vauquelin de la Fresnaye (*v. supra*, p. 129), whom he may have read. Alexander is a sort of general lover in poetry; he likes this in Virgil, that in Ovid, that other in Horace; defends Lucan against Scaliger, even to the point of blaming the conclusion of the *Æneid*; finds "no man that doth satisfy him more than that notable Italian, Torquato Tasso"; admits the

[1] To be most readily found in Rogers's *Memorials of the Earl of Stirling* (vol. ii. pp. 205-210; Edinburgh, 1877), where, however, it appears merely as one of the Appendices to a book of more or less pure genealogy, without the slightest editorial information as to date or *provenance*. It seems to be taken from the 1711 folio of Drummond's *Works*: and to have been written in 1634, between Bacon's death and Ben's.

[2] From Park, and from Messrs Gayley and Scott. I did not always agree with my late friend Dr Grosart: but I think he was better advised when he called it "disappointing."

historical as well as the fictitious poetic subject; but thinks that "the treasures of poetry cannot be better bestowed than upon the apparelling of Truth; and Truth cannot be better apparelled to please young lovers than with the excellences of poetry." Disrespectful language neither need nor should be used of so slight a thing, which is, and pretends to be, nothing more than a sort of table-book entry by a gentleman of learning as well as quality. But, if it has any "importance" at all, it is surely that of being yet another proof of the rapid diffusion of critical taste and practice, not of stating "theory and methods considerably in advance of the age." If we could take extensively his protest against those who "would bound the boundless liberty of the poet," such language might indeed be justified; but the context strictly limits it to the very minor, though then, and for long before and after, commonly debated, question of Fiction *v.* History in subject.

Ben Jonson: his equipment.

Save perhaps in one single respect (where the defect was not wholly his fault), Ben Jonson might be described as a critic armed at all points. His knowledge of literature was extremely wide, being at the same time solid and thorough. While he had an understanding above all things strong and masculine, he was particularly addicted, though in no dilettante fashion, to points of form. His whole energies, and they were little short of Titanic, were given to literature. And, lastly, if he had not the supremest poetic genius, he had such a talent that only the neighbourhood of supremacy dwarfs it. Where he came short was not in a certain hardness of temper and scholasticism of attitude: for these, if kept within bounds, and tempered by that enthusiasm for letters which he possessed, are not bad equipments for the critic. It was rather in the fact that he still came too early for it to be possible for him, except by the help of a miracle, to understand the achievements and value of the vernaculars. By his latest days, indeed,[1] the positive per-

[1] It may be well to point out that these days carried him far beyond the point at which we have stopped for Italian and for French. His solidarity with the Elizabethans proper, however, makes his inclusion here imperative: and the fact must be taken into consideration in judging the relative lengths of this and the preceding chapters.

formance of these was already very great. Spain has hardly added anything since, and Italy not very much, to her share of European literature; France was already in the first flush of her "classical" period, after a long and glorious earlier history: and what Ben's own contemporaries in England had done, all men know. But mediæval literature was shut from him, as from all, till far later; he does not seem to have been much drawn to Continental letters, and, perhaps in their case, as certainly in English, he was too near—too much a part of the movement—to get it into firm perspective.

His Prefaces, &c.

In a sense the critical temper in Jonson is all-pervading. It breaks out side by side with, and sometimes even within, his sweetest lyrics; it interposes what may be called *parabases* in the most unexpected passages[1] of his plays. *The Poetaster* is almost as much criticism dramatised as *The Frogs*. But there are three "places," or groups of places, which it inspires, not in mere suggestion, but with propriety—the occasional Prefaces, or observations, to and on the plays themselves, the *Conversations with Drummond*, and, above all, the at last fairly (though not yet sufficiently) known *Discoveries* or *Timber*.

To piece together, with any elaboration, the more scattered critical passages would be fitter for a monograph on Jonson than for a History of Criticism. The "Address to the Readers" of *Sejanus*, which contains a reference to the author's lost *Observations on Horace, his Art of Poetry* (not the least of such

[1] Take as one of a hundred, and from the less read pieces, that interesting passage in the masque of *The New World Discovered in the Moon*, which Gifford has made more interesting by a further discovery in Theobald's copy:—

Chro. Is he a man's poet or a woman's poet, I pray you

2nd Her. Is there any such difference?

Fact. Many, as betwixt your man's tailor and your woman's tailor.

1st Her. How, may we beseech you?

Fact. I'll show you: your man's poet may break out strong and deep i' the mouth, . . . but your woman's poet must flow, and stroke the ear, and as one of them said of himself sweetly—

"Must write a verse as smooth and calm as cream,
In which there is no torrent, nor scarce stream."

Whereon the injured "Tibbalds": "*Woman's Poet, his soft versification—Mr P——.*"

The Induction to *Every Man out of His Humour*, a very large part of *Cynthia's Revels*, with its principal character of Crites, and its audacious self-praise in the Epilogue, not a little of *The Silent Woman*, and scores of other places in play and poem, might be added.

losses) is a fair specimen of them: the dedication of *Volpone* to "the most noble and most equal sisters, Oxford and Cambridge," a better. In both, and in numerous other passages of prose and verse, we find the real and solid, though somewhat partial, knowledge, the strong sense, the methodic scholarship of Ben, side by side with his stately, not Euphuistic, but rather too close-packed style, his not ill-founded, but slightly excessive, self-confidence, and that rough knock-down manner of assertion and characterisation which reappeared in its most unguarded form in the *Conversations* with Drummond.

The Drummond Conversations.

The critical utterances of these *Conversations* are far too interesting to be passed over here, though we cannot discuss them in full. They tell us that Ben thought all (other) rhymes inferior to couplets, and had written a treatise (which, again, would we had!) both against Campion and Daniel (see *ante*). His objection to "stanzas and cross rhymes" was that "as the purpose might lead beyond them, they were all forced." Sidney "made every one speak as well as himself," and so did not keep "decorum" (cf. Puttenham above). Spenser's stanzas and matter did not please him. Daniel was no poet. He did not like Drayton's "long verses," nor Sylvester's and Fairfax's translations. He thought the translations of Homer (Chapman's) and Virgil (Phaer's) into "long Alexandrines" (*i.e.*, fourteeners) were but prose: yet elsewhere we hear that he "had some of Chapman by heart." Harington's *Ariosto* was the worst of all translations. Donne was sometimes "profane," and "for not keeping of accent deserved hanging"; but elsewhere he was "the first poet of the world in some things," though, "through not being understood, he would perish."[1] Shakespeare "wanted art": and "Abram Francis (Abraham Fraunce) in his English Hexameters was a fool." "Bartas was not a poet, but a verser, because he wrote not fiction." He cursed Petrarch for redacting verses to sonnets, "which were like Procrustes' bed." Guarini incurred the

[1] These dicta, thus juxtaposed, should make all argument about apparently one-sided judgments superfluous. If Drummond had omitted the first or the last, we should have been utterly wrong in arguing from the remainder.

same blame as Sir Philip: and Lucan was good in parts only. "The best pieces of Ronsard were his Odes." Drummond's own verses "were all good, but smelled too much of the schools." The "silver" Latins, as we should expect, pleased him best. "To have written Southwell's 'Burning Babe,' he would have been content to destroy many of his."

These are the chief really critical items, though there are others (putting personal gossip aside) of interest; but it may be added, as a curiosity, that he told Drummond that he himself "writ all first in prose" at Camden's suggestion, and held that "verses stood all by sense, without colours or accent" (poetic diction or metre), "which yet at other times he denied," says the reporter, a sentence ever to be remembered in connection with these jottings. Remembering it, there is nothing shocking in any of these observations, nor anything really inconsistent. A true critic never holds the neat, positive, "reduced-to-its-lowest-terms" estimate of authors, in which a criticaster delights. His view is always facetted, conditioned. But he may, in a friendly chat, or a conversation for victory, exaggerate this facet or condition, while altogether suppressing others; and this clearly is what Ben did.

For gloss on the *Conversations*, for reduction to something like system of the critical remarks scattered through the works, and for the nearest approach we can have to a formal presentment of Ben's critical views, we must go to the *Discoveries*.[1]

The Discoveries.

The fact that we find no less than four titles for the book—*Timber*, *Explorata*, *Discoveries*, and *Sylva*—with others of its peculiarities, is explained by the second fact that Jonson never published it. It never appeared in print till the folio of 1641, years after its author's death. The *Discoveries* are described as being made "upon men and matter as they have flowed out of his daily reading, or had their reflux to his peculiar notions of the times." They are, in fact, notes

[1] The best separate edition is that of Prof. Schelling of Philadelphia (Boston, U.S.A., 1892). I give the pp. of this, as well as the Latin Headings of sections, which will enable any one to trace the passage in complete editions of the Works such as Cunningham's Gifford. It is strange that no one has numbered these sections for convenience of reference.

unnumbered and unclassified (though batches of more or fewer sometimes run on the same subject), each with its Latin heading, and varying in length from a few lines to that of his friend (and partly master) Bacon's shorter *Essays*. The influence of those "silver" Latins whom he loved so much is prominent: large passages are simply translated from Quintilian, and for some time[1] the tenor is ethical rather than literary. A note on *Perspicuitas—elegantia* (p. 7) breaks these, but has nothing noteworthy about it, and *Bellum scribentium* (p. 10) is only a satiric exclamation on the folly of "writers committed together by the ears for ceremonies, syllables, points," &c. The longer *Nil gratius protervo libro* (pp. 11, 12) seems a retort for some personal injury, combined with the old complaint of the decadence and degradation of poetry.[2] There is just but rather general stricture in *Eloquentia* (p. 16) on the difference between the arguments of the study and of the world. "I would no more choose a rhetorician for reigning in a school," says Ben, "than I would choose a pilot for rowing in a pond."[3] *Memoria* (p. 18) includes a gird at Euphuism. At last we come to business. *Censura de poetis* (p. 21), introduced by a fresh fling at Euphuism, in *De vere argutis*, opens with a tolerably confident note, "Nothing in our age is more preposterous than the running judgments upon poetry and poets," with much more to the same effect, the whole being pointed by the fling, "If it were a question of the water-rhymer's[4] works against Spenser's, I doubt not but they would find more suffrages." The famous passage on Shakespeare follows: and the development of Ben's view, "would he had blotted a thousand," leads to a more general disquisition on the differences of wits, which includes the sentence already referred to. "Such [*i.e.*, haphazard and inconsistent] are all the Essayists, even their master Mon-

[1] It may be observed that the shorter aphorisms rise to the top—at least the beginning.

[2] "He is upbraidingly called a poet. . . . The professors, indeed, have made the learning cheap."

[3] It is here that Ben borrows from Petronius not merely the sentiment but the phrase, "umbratical doctor" (see vol. i. p. 244 note).

[4] "Taylor the Water-Poet," certainly bad enough as a poet—though not as a man. But the selection of Spenser as the other pole is an invaluable correction to the sweeping attack in the *Conversations*.

taigne." The notes now keep close to literature throughout in substance, though their titles (*e.g.*, *Ignorantia animæ*), and so forth, may seem wider. A heading, *De Claris Oratoribus* (p. 26), leads to yet another of the purple passages of the book —that on Bacon, in which is intercalated a curious *Scriptorum catalogus*, limited, for the most part, though Surrey and Wyatt are mentioned, to prose writers. And then for some time ethics, politics, and other subjects, again have Ben's chief attention.[1]

We return to literature, after some interval (but with a parenthetic glance at the *poesis et pictura* notion at p. 49), on p. 52, in a curious unheaded letter to an unnamed Lordship on Education, much of which is translated directly from Ben Jonson's favourite Quintilian; and then directly accost it again with a tractatule *De stilo et optimo scribendi genere*, p. 54, hardly parting company thereafter. Ben's prescription is threefold: read the best authors, observe the best speakers, and exercise your own style much. But he is well aware that no "precepts will profit a fool," and he adapts old advice to English ingeniously, in bidding men read, not only Livy before Sallust, but also Sidney before Donne, and to beware of Chaucer or Gower at first. Here occurs the well-known *dictum*, that Spenser "in affecting the ancients writ no language; yet I would have him read for his matter." A fine general head opens with the excellent version of Quintilian, "We should not protect our sloth with the patronage of Difficulty," and this is followed by some shrewd remarks on diction—the shrewdest being that, after all, the best custom makes, and ever will continue to make, the best speech—with a sharp stroke at Lucretius for "scabrousness," and at Chaucerisms. Brevity of style, Tacitean and other, is cautiously commended. In the phrase (*Oratio imago animi*), p. 64, "language most shows a man," Ben seems to anticipate Buffon, as he later does Wordsworth and Coleridge, by insisting that style is not merely the dress, but the body of thought.[2] All this dis-

[1] Perhaps, indeed, an exception should be made in favour of the section *De malignitate Studentium*, p. 34, which reiterates the necessity of "the exact knowledge of all virtues and their contraries" on the part of the poet.

[2] He may have taken this from the Italians.

cussion, which enters into considerable detail, is of the first importance, and it occupies nearly a quarter of the whole book. It is continued, the continuation reaching till the end, by a separate discussion of poetry.

It is interesting, but less so than what comes before. A somewhat acid, though personally guarded, description of the present state of the Art introduces the stock definition of "making," and its corollary that a poet is not one who writes in measure, but one who feigns—all as we have found it before, but (as we should expect of Ben) in succincter and more scholarly form. Yet the first requisite of the poet is *ingenium* —goodness of natural wit; the next exercise of his parts— "bringing all to the forge and file" (*sculpte, lime, cisèle!*); the third Imitation—to which Ben gives a turn (not exactly new, for we have met it from Vida downwards), which is not an improvement, by keeping its modern meaning, and understanding by it the following of the classics. "But that which we especially require in him is an exactness of study and multiplicity of reading." Yet his liberty is not to be so narrowly circumscribed as some would have it. This leads to some interesting remarks on the ancient critics, which the author had evidently meant to extend: as it is, they break off short.[1] We turn to the Parts of comedy and tragedy, where Ben is strictly regular—the fable is the imitation of one entire and perfect action, &c. But this also breaks off, after a discussion of fable itself and episode, with an evidently quite disconnected fling at "hobbling poems which run like a brewer's cart on the stones."

Form of the book.

These *Discoveries* have to be considered with a little general care before we examine them more particularly. They were, it has been said, never issued by the author himself, and we do not know whether he ever would have issued them in their present form. On the one hand, they are very carefully written, and not mere jottings. In form (though more modern in style) they resemble the earlier essays of that Bacon whom they so magnificently celebrate, in their

[1] This is one of the most lacrimable of the gaps. Ben must have known other authorities besides Quintilian well: he even quotes, though only in part, the great passage of Simylus (vol. i. p. 25 note).

deliberate conciseness and pregnancy. On the other hand, it is almost impossible to doubt that some at least were intended for expansion; it is difficult not to think that there was plenty more stuff of the same kind in the solidly constructed and well-stored treasuries of Ben's intelligence and erudition. It is most difficult of all not to see that, in some cases, the thoughts are co-ordinated into regular tractates, in others left loose, as if for future treatment of the same kind.

Its date.

Secondly, we should like to know rather more than we do of the *time* of their composition. Some of them—such as the retrospect of Bacon, and to a less degree that of Shakespeare—*must* be late; there is a strong probability that all date from the period between the fire in Ben's study, which destroyed so much, and his death—say between 1620 and 1637. But at the same time there is nothing to prevent his having remembered and recopied observations of earlier date.

Mosaic of old and new.

Thirdly, it is most important that we rightly understand the composition of the book. It has sometimes been discovered[1] in these *Discoveries*, with pride, or surprise, or even scorn, that Ben borrowed in them very largely from the ancients. Of course he did, as well as something, though less, from the Italian critics of the age immediately before his own.[2] But in neither case could he have hoped for a moment—and in neither is there the slightest reason to suppose that he would have wished if he could have hoped—to disguise his borrowings from a learned age. When a man—such as, for

[1] I am most anxious not to be thought to reflect on Professor Schelling in this remark. Dr Schelling's indagations of Ben's debts are most interesting, and always made in the right spirit, while, like a good farmer and sportsman, he has left plenty for those who come after him to glean and bag. For instance, the very curious passage, taken verbatim from the elder Seneca, about the Platonic Apology (cf. vol. i. p. 237).

[2] Yet in re-reading Jonson, just after a pretty elaborate overhauling of the Italians, I find very little certain indebtedness of detail. Mr Spingarn seems to me to go too far in tracing, p. 88, "small Latin and less Greek" to Minturno's "small Latin and *very* small Greek," and the distinction of *poeta, poema, poesis* to Scaliger or Maggi. Fifty people might have independently thought of the first; and the second is an application of a "common form" nearly as old as rhetoric.

instance, Sterne—wishes to steal and escape, he goes to what nobody reads, not to what everybody is reading. And the Latins of the Silver Age, the two Senecas, Petronius, Quintilian, Pliny, were specially favourites with the Jacobean time. In what is going to be said no difference will be made between Ben's borrowings and his original remarks: nor will the fact of the borrowing be referred to unless there is some special critical reason. Even the literal translations, which are not uncommon, are made his own by the nervous idiosyncrasy of the phrase, and its thorough adjustment to the context and to his own vigorous and massive temperament.

Of real "book-criticism" there are four chief passages, the brief flings at Montaigne and at "*Tamerlanes* and *Tamerchams*," and the longer notices of Shakespeare and Bacon.

The fling at Montaigne;

The flirt at "all the Essayists, even their master Montaigne," is especially interesting, because of the high opinion which Jonson elsewhere expresses of Bacon, the chief, if not the first, English Essayist of his time, and because of the fact that not a few of these very *Discoveries* are "Essays," if any things ever were. Nor would it be very easy to make out a clear distinction, in anything but name, between some of Ben's most favourite ancient writers and these despised persons. It is, however, somewhat easier to understand the reason of the condemnation. Jonson's classically ordered mind probably disliked the ostentatious desultoriness and incompleteness of the Essay, the refusal, as it were out of mere insolence, to undertake an orderly treatise. Nor is it quite impossible that he failed fully to understand Montaigne, and was to some extent the dupe of that great writer's fanfaronade of promiscuousness.

The "*Tamerlane* and *Tamercham*"[1] fling is not even at first sight surprising. It was quite certain that Ben would seriously despise what Shakespeare only laughed at—the con-

[1] P. 27. "The *Tamerlanes* and *Tamerchams* of the late age, which had nothing in them but the scenical strutting and furious vociferation to warrant them." It is just worth noting that Jonson thought there was more than this in Marlowe; and that the early edd. of *Tamburlaine* are anonymous.

fusion, the bombast, the want of order and scheme in the "University Wits"—and it is not probable that he was well enough acquainted with the even now obscure development of the earliest Elizabethan drama to appreciate the enormous improvement which they wrought. Nay, the nearer approach even of such a dull thing as *Gorboduc* to "the height of Seneca his style," might have a little bribed him as it bribed Sidney. He is true to his side —to his division of the critical creed—in this also.

at Tamerlane,

The train of thought—censure of the vulgar preference—runs clear from this to the best known passage of the whole, the section *De Shakespeare Nostrat.* It cannot be necessary to quote it, or to point out that Ben's eulogy, splendid as it is, acquires tenfold force from the fact that it is avowedly given by a man whose general literary theory is different from that of the subject, while the censure accompanying it loses force in exactly the same proportion. What Ben here blames, any ancient critic (perhaps even Longinus) would have blamed too: what Ben praises, it is not certain that any ancient critic, except Longinus, would have seen. Nor is the captious censure of "Cæsar did never wrong but with just cause" the least interesting part of the whole. The paradox is not in our present texts: and there have, of course, not been wanting commentators to accuse Jonson of garbling or of forgetfulness. This is quite commentatorially gratuitous and puerile. It is very like Shakespeare to have written what Ben says: very like Ben to object to the paradox (which, *pace tanti viri*, is not "ridiculous" at all, but a deliberate and effective hyperbole); very like the players to have changed the text; and most of all like the commentators to make a fuss about the matter.

the Shakespeare Passage,

What may seem the more unstinted eulogy of Bacon is not less interesting. For here it is obvious that Ben is speaking with fullest sympathy, and with all but a full acknowledgment of having met an ideal. Except the slight stroke, "when he could spare or pass by a jest," and the gentle insinuation that *Strength*, the gift of God, was what

and that on Bacon.

Bacon's friends had to implore for him, there is no admixture whatever in the eulogy of "him who hath filled up all numbers,[1] and performed that in our tongue which may be compared or preferred to insolent Greece or haughty Rome." Indeed it could not have been—even if Ben Jonson had not been a friend, and, in a way, follower of Bacon—but that he should regard the Chancellor as his chief of literary men. Bacon, unluckily for himself, lacked the "unwedgeable and gnarled" strength of the dramatist, and also was without his poetic fire, just as Ben could never have soared to the vast, if vague, conceptions of Bacon's materialist-Idealism. But they were both soaked in "literature," as then understood; they were the two greatest masters of the closely packed style that says twenty things in ten words: and yet both could, on occasion, be almost as rhetorically imaginative as Donne or Greville. It is doubtful whether Bacon's own scientific scorn for words without matter surpassed Jonson's more literary contempt of the same phenomenon. Everywhere, or almost everywhere, there was between them the *idem velle et idem nolle.*

A limited précis, however, and a few remarks on special points, cannot do the *Discoveries* justice. The fragmentary character of the notes that compose it, the pregnant and deliberately "astringed" style in which these notes are written, so that they are themselves the bones, as it were, of a much larger treatise, defy such treatment. Yet it is full of value, as it gives us more than glimpses

"Of what a critic was in Jonson lost,"

or but piecemeal shown. We shall return, in the next chapter, to his relative position; but something should be said here of his intrinsic character.

[1] One cannot but remember—with pity or glee, according to mood and temperament — how the Bacon-Shakespeare-maniacs have actually taken this in the sense of *poetic* "numbers." But in truth their study is not likely to be much in haughty Rome and its language, or to have led them either to Petronius and his *omnium nume[ro]rum*, or to Seneca and his *insolenti Græcia.*

He does not, as must have been clearly seen, escape the "classical" limitation. With some ignorance, doubtless, and doubtless also some contempt, of the actual achievements of prose romance, and with that stubborn distrust of the modern tongues for miscellaneous prose purposes, which lasted till far into the seventeenth century, if it did not actually survive into the eighteenth, he still clings to the old mistakes about the identity of poetry and "fiction," about the supremacy of oratory in prose. We hear nothing about the "new versifying," though no doubt this would have been fully treated in his handling of Campion and Daniel: but had he had any approval for it, that approval must have been glanced at. His preference for the (stopped) couplet[1] foreshadowed that which, with beneficial effects in some ways, if by no means in all, was to influence the whole of English poetry, with the rarest exceptions, for nearly two centuries. The personal arrogance which, as in Wordsworth's case, affected all Ben's judgment of contemporaries, and which is almost too fully reflected in the Drummond Conversations, would probably have made even his more deliberate judgments of these—his judgments "for publication"—inadequate. But it is fair to remember that Ben's theory (if not entirely his practice, especially in his exquisite lyrics and almost equally exquisite masques) constrained him to be severe to those contemporaries, from Spenser, Shakespeare, and Donne downwards. The mission of the generation may be summed up in the three words, Liberty, Variety, Romance. Jonson's tastes were for Order, Uniformity, Classicism.

General character of the book.

He is thus doubly interesting—interesting as putting both with sounder scholarship and more original wit what men from Ascham to Puttenham, and later, had been trying to say before him, in the sense of adapting classical precepts to English: and far more interesting as adumbrating, beforehand, the creed of Dryden, and Pope, and Samuel Johnson. Many of his individual judgments are as shrewd as they are one-sided; they are always well, and sometimes admirably, expressed, in a

[1] Daniel had frankly defended *enjambement*.

style which unites something of Elizabethan colour, and much of Jacobean weight, with not a little of Augustan simplicity and proportion. He does not head the line of English critics; but he heads, and worthily, that of English critics who have been great both in criticism and in creation.[1]

[1] It seemed unnecessary to enlarge the space given to the men of Eliza and our James, by including the merer grammarians and pedagogues, from Mulcaster to that fervid Scot, Mr Hume, who, in 1617, extolled the "Orthography and Congruity" of his native speech (ed. Wheatley, E.E.T.S., 1865). Of Mulcaster, however, it deserves to be mentioned that, not so much in his *Positions* (1581: ed. Quick, London, 1887), which have been, as in his *Elementarie*, which should be, reprinted, he displays a more than Pléiade enthusiasm for the vernacular. Unluckily this last is not easy of access, even the B.M. copy being a "Grenville" book, and hedged round with forms and fears.

INTERCHAPTER IV.

THE proper appreciation of the period surveyed in the foregoing Book is of perhaps greater importance than that of any other part of this History. We have seen, in the three preceding Interchapters, what it was that prevented Greek, Roman, and Mediæval criticism respectively from attaining completeness, and how the preventives worked. We saw further, in the last pages of the First Volume, in what condition literature, and at least the possibilities of the criticism of literature, were left at the beginning of the Renaissance. And now we have seen what additions the Renaissance made—not, indeed, in detail, to literature itself, for that belongs to another story than ours, but what additions it made—to the criticism of literature. In mere bulk these additions were very considerable. The extant critical writing of these hundred years (or rather of the last seventy of them), excluding mere rhetorical schoolbooks, probably exceeds, and very largely exceeds, the total of classical and mediæval work on the subject which we possess, even inclusive of schoolbooks. For the very first time Criticism, not as a sort of half accidental and more than half shame-faced extension of Rhetoric, but in and for itself, received a really large share of the intellectual attention of the period.

Moreover, the advantages possessed by Renaissance critics (as we partly also saw in the place referred to) were likewise very great. Men were beginning really to know and really to understand antiquity; they had the whole body of mediæval literature complete, finished, ready for their appreciation; and they or their contemporaries were daily and yearly building up great literatures in all the principal countries of Europe, except

Germany, and not wholly despicable literatures there and elsewhere. The excuse of the want of comparison, which had been valid for Greece, less valid but still partly so for Rome, and valid again, though for different reasons, in the Middle Ages, was dwindling and disappearing every day. There was no want of interest in the subject; there was no want of examples, both encouraging and warning, of method.

Nor is it possible to deny that the actual accomplishment of the time was very considerable likewise. When a century finds a certain department of intellectual activity almost uncultivated; when it leaves that subject in a state of active cultivation; and when, further, two following centuries are content to opine almost wholly in the sense to which it has generally inclined,—that century can hardly be said to have wasted its years. Accomplishment—very remarkable and solid accomplishment—it can certainly boast. It must be the business of this Interchapter to examine the nature and (partly at least) the value of that accomplishment, now that we have fully surveyed its items, and frankly admitted a certain general result.

In considering the critical achievement of Italy, the earliest in time, the most abundant in result, the most influential—in fact an abridgment, and no mean abridgment, of that of Europe—we cannot but see at once that there was a certain disadvantage accompanying the inevitableness and the general propriety of this Italian prerogative. No other country had so much learning; but, for this very reason, no other country was so certain rather to over- than to under-value the importance of ancient doctrine. No country had so perfect a literature, though other countries had literatures older, richer, and more vigorous; but this very perfection, while it might seem to provide a fertile field for criticism, had two dangers. The Italians were likely to look down upon, or simply to ignore, other literatures; and, from the failing, though slowly and not conspicuously failing, force of their creative power, they were likely to turn to logomachies and debating-society wrangles. Nay, there was a third peril. No country had so little properly mediæval literature as Italy; and none therefore was more certain to set the fashion of ignoring or slighting that mediæval performance

which is so invaluable as a check and balance-redresser. And perhaps we might even add a fourth—that while French and English had got practically beyond the reach of mere dialect-jealousy, Italian had not; and that too much of the abundant interest in literature was throughout turned upon mere grammar and mere linguistics.

Perhaps for these reasons, perhaps for others, perhaps for none assignable except by superfluous guess-work, Italian criticism, active and voluminous as it was, settled very early into certain well-marked limits and channels, and almost wholly confined itself within them, though these channels underwent no infrequent intersection or confluence.

The main texts and patterns of the critics of the Italian Renaissance were three—the *Ars Poetica* of Horace, the *Poetics* of Aristotle, and the various Platonic places dealing with poetry. These latter had, as we have seen, begun to affect Italian thought, directly or by transmission through this or that medium, before the close of the fourteenth century; and the maintenance of the Platonic ban, the refutation of it, or the more or less ingenious acceptance and evasion of it, with the help of the Platonic blessing, had been a tolerably familiar exercise from the time of Boccaccio to the time of Savonarola. But Horace and Aristotle gave rules and patterns of much more definiteness. Of the writers of the abundant critical literature which has been partly surveyed, some directly comment these texts; others follow them with more or less selection or combination; many take up separate questions suggested by them; very few, if any, face the subject without some prepossession derived from them.

The very earliest regular criticism, as in Vida and the first books of Trissino, is either strictly grammatical and formal or else tends to expatiate further in the Horatian path of rather desultory practical hints for composition, these latter usually tending towards a more or less slavish "Follow the ancients." But, from the time of Daniello onwards, more abstract views and questionings, especially in the direction of a sort of Eirenicon between Aristotle and Plato, begin to engage the attention of critics, sometimes as a prelude to study of formal Poetics,

sometimes to the exclusion of this. The most thoroughgoing as well as about the ablest example of this latter kind is probably the *Naugerius* of Fracastoro, where this distinguished physician and physicist, himself a skilled versifier and even something of a poet, scarcely touches poets and poetry in the concrete more than he might in a dialogue on physics or metaphysics, and is entirely occupied with questions of the extremest "metapoetic," or metacriticism.

This kind of discussion, which is prominent in the whole body of critics from Daniello to Summo, is, with its extensions in the direction of the Theory of the Drama, the Theory of the Heroic Poem, &c., no doubt the most characteristic, and perhaps even the constitutive, feature of Italian criticism. It seems to have been that which most attracted foreign scholars, and stirred them up to emulation; it is very rarely omitted altogether by anybody, save the merest grammarians. In fact, it so impressed itself, during this period, upon the imagination, the memory, the intellectual habit, not merely of Italy but of Europe, that to this day critics who neglect it are looked at askance by many, if not by most, of their fellows.

Questions, however, more practical than these, yet not of quite such extreme practicality as the mere questions of grammar and dialect, of metric and composition, did actually occupy the Italians. About the middle of the century the lucubrations of Cinthio and Pigna on the question of the Romances and their relation to Epic and to the Aristotelian system, opened up the most promising prospect by far that had ever yet been disclosed to criticism. Had these inquiries been followed up—had they been extended from the Romance to the *novella*, which had already become such a feature of Italian vernacular literature—had Italy provided something not less vigorous, but more polished, than the English Interlude and romantic mystery of the *Mary Magdalene* type, or the French *farce* and *sotie*, so that a similar investigation might have been further extended to drama—there is no saying what might not have been achieved. But this was not permitted.

As a matter of fact, the times were not ready, nor the circumstances. The profitable promise of the discussion on

the *romanzi* dwindled off into the mere logomachies or personalities of the *Gerusalemme* controversy, and into endless formula-making for the abstract Heroic Poem. But little trace of it is seen on the vigorous and independent mind of Castelvetro; less on the equally vigorous, still more independent, but perhaps rather more scholastic, mind of Patrizzi. For the former, Aristotle is still the special though not quite the exclusive battleground, or canvas, or whatever metaphor may be preferred; and he labours—as all these Italians do, in strange apparent, though perhaps not real, contrast to the vagueness and far-reaching sweep of their more abstract inquiries—under a difficulty, under a seeming impossibility, of getting beyond disjointed observations and comments on Aristotle, Homer, Dante, Petrarch, into a fruitful and satisfying critical study of any poem or poet. Scaliger drills the whole mob of formal and theoretical particulars into an orderly regiment, indulges in plentiful criticism of the verbal and occasional kind, attempts to take a (for him) complete historic survey, and achieves at least a quasi-tiebeam, a bastard unity, for his work by his all-pervading, uncompromising Virgil-worship, which gives a test for everything, an answer for everything, a standard always at hand. Patrizzi seems, with his double method of historical survey and argumentative inquiry, to have at last unbarred the very gates of the true path. But he does not proceed far along it; and astonishingly sound as well as original as are many of his conclusions, he hardly attempts to apply them to modern poetry, except in the *Trimerone*, where he is too much entangled in the special quibbles and squabbles of the controversy to which it belongs. All the rest —even interesting people like Minturno—sometimes peep over the wall, yet confine their actual walk within it.

Between all the schools, and from among the welter of the individuals, there arises, in the mysterious way in which such things do arise, and which defies all but shallow and superficial explanation, a sort of general critical creed, every particular article of which would probably have been signed by no two particular persons—perhaps by no one—but which is ready to become, and in the next century does become, orthodox and

accepted as a whole. And this creed runs somewhat as follows:—

On the higher and more abstract questions of poetry (which are by no means to be neglected) Aristotle is the guide; but the meaning of Aristotle is not always self-evident even so far as it goes, and it sometimes requires supplementing. Poetry is the imitation of nature: but this imitation may be carried on either by copying nature as it is or by inventing things which do not actually exist, and have never actually existed, but which conduct themselves according to the laws of nature and reason. The poet is *not* a public nuisance, but quite the contrary. He must, however, both delight *and* instruct.

As for the Kinds of poetry, they are not mere working classifications of the practice of poets, but have technically constituting definitions from which they might be independently developed, and according to which they ought to be composed. The general laws of Tragedy are given by Aristotle; but it is necessary to extend his prescription of Unity so as to enjoin three species—of Action, Time, and Place. Tragedy must be written in verse, which, though not exactly the constituting form of poetry generally, is almost or quite inseparable from it. The illegitimacy of prose in Comedy is less positive. Certain extensions of the rules of the older Epic may be admitted, so as to constitute a new Epic or Heroic Poem; but it is questionable whether this may have the full liberty of Romance, and it is subject to Unity, though not to the dramatic Unity. Other Kinds are inferior to these.

In practising them, and in practising all, the poet is to look first, midmost, and last to the practice of the ancients. "The ancients" may even occasionally be contracted to little more than Virgil; they may be extended to take in Homer, or may be construed much more widely. But taking things on the whole, "the ancients" have anticipated almost everything, and in everything that they have anticipated have done so well that the best chance of success is simply to imitate them. The detailed pre-

cepts of Horace are never to be neglected; if supplemented, they must be supplemented in the same sense.

It is less the business of the historian, after drawing up this creed, to criticise it favourably or unfavourably, than to point out that it had actually, by the year 1600, come very near to formulated existence. We shall find it in actual formulation in the ensuing book; we have already seen it in more than adumbration, governing the pronouncements of a scholar and a man of genius like Ben Jonson thirty years later than the close of the sixteenth century. A full estimate of its merits and demerits must be postponed to the close of this volume. But it may be observed at once that it is, *prima facie*, not a perfect creed by any means. It has (and this, I think, has been too seldom noticed) a fault, almost, if not quite, as great on the *a priori* side as that which it confessedly has on the *a posteriori*. It does not face the facts; it blinks all mediæval and a great deal of existing modern literature. But, then, to do it justice, it does not pretend to do other than blink them. The fault in its own more special province is much more glaring, though, as has been said, it has, by a sort of sympathy, been much more ignored. There is no real connection between the higher and the lower principles of Neo-Classicism. There is not merely one crevasse, not easily to be crossed, in this glacier of Correctness; there are two or three. Let us, for argument's sake, concede all the points in Fracastoro's *Naugerius*, the Aconcagua or Everest of the school. Let us allow that to the real lover of poetry it skills not much whether he grants or denies all its propositions. But how are we to pass from these to the further group—to allow that Reason, Common-Sense, Nature, will govern the poet's mediate and lower necessities? How from this, again, to the still other group of dramatic, heroic, miscellaneous requirements of the Correct? How from any of them to the entirely arbitrary warning clause that the ancients have actually or virtually anticipated everything?

On the more obvious faults of Italian criticism in detail—its extravagant Virgil-worship; its refusal (except in such rare and

practically isolated cases as Lilius Giraldus' knowledge of Chaucer and Wyatt, Patrizzi's of Fauchet and his Old French subjects) to take any account of foreign modern literature; its coterie-squabbling and the rest, it would not be profitable to dwell much. But it is curious and instructive to notice how little appreciative criticism of contemporaries this active critical period gives. If you start a controversy of an ancient against a modern or a modern against a modern—of Homer against Ariosto, or of Ariosto against Tasso — there will be plenty of persons to take a hand. For a really *appreciative* study of any writer, modern or ancient, I do not know where to look. Men are so besotted, on the one hand, with their inquiries into general principles; on the other, with their sporadic annotations, that they cannot attempt anything of the kind.

Yet it would be an act of the grossest injustice and ingratitude to refuse or to stint recognition of the immense services that the Italians rendered to criticism at this time. It was, in their own stately word, a veritable case of *risorgimento;* and of resurrection in a body far better organised, far more gifted, than that which had gone to sleep a thousand years before.

In the year 1500 we may look over Europe and find criticism really alive and awake *nusquam et nullibi*—at best fast asleep, and dreaming a little with the dreams of Gavin Douglas or (had he lived a couple of years longer) of Savonarola, or of such more infantine persons as Augustine Käsenbrot. In 1600 criticism is a classed and recognised department of literature; Faustino Summo, in the very year, can quote authority after authority, refer—as to a sort of common law of the subject—to *dicta* and *obiter dicta* of nearly three generations of distinguished judges. And Italian criticism has colonised: its colonies, with the virtues of that kind, are showing characteristics sometimes quite different, though derived from those of the mother country, and are carrying the critical torch round the world. No matter for the moment whether the more perfect way has been reached, or the less perfect way declined upon. The time of "liking grossly," of composing anyhow, has passed: that of critical study of the old, and critical reception of the new, has begun.

Never, therefore, shall I join in the anathema in which De

Quincey[1] has coupled Italian critics with Greek rhetoricians. In fact, the Italians suffer far more unjustly than the Greeks. Castelvetro and Patrizzi alone would be enough to clear their company handsomely: Capriano, Cinthio Giraldi, Minturno could put in quite sufficient bail on their own recognisances: yet others would leave the court more than recommended to mercy.[2] I disagree with many of the principles of most of them; I wish that even those with whom I agree had opened their eyes wider, kept them more steadily on the object, and cared less about fighting abstract prizes, and more about appreciating the goods which the gods had given them in concrete literature. It was also a misfortune, no doubt, that no man of very distinct genius and whole-hearted devotion gave himself up to the business. Vida was a good kind of pedant, and Trissino at heart a philologist; Daniello, Capriano, and most of the rest, including even Minturno, down to Denores and Summo, persons of respectable talent merely; Fracastoro, a man of science; Cinthio, a novelist and miscellanist; Scaliger, a not quite so good kind of more deeply-dyed pedant; Castelvetro, a scholar, with the scholar's quarrelsomeness; Patrizzi, a philosopher primarily; Torquato Tasso himself, a great poet, with, for a poet, a sensible and logical but curiously timid and hesitating mind. Not a few of them did great things for Criticism; all together they did a really mighty thing for her and for Literature: but they were not her sworn servants, as Lessing and Hazlitt, as Sainte-Beuve and Arnold, were later.

Let there be to them not the less but almost the more glory! It is something—nay, it is very much—to have created a Kind. Up to their time Criticism had been a mere Cinderella in the literary household. Aristotle had taken her up as he had taken all Arts and Sciences. The Rhetoricians had found her a useful handmaid to Rhetoric. Roman *dilettanti* had dallied with her. The solid good sense and good feeling of Quintilian had decided that she must be "no casual mistress but a wife"

[1] See vol. i. p. 121 note.

[2] Fracastoro and Scaliger could at once obtain a writ of ease, as De Quincey is evidently speaking of "Italian" critics in the vernacular. I hope he was not thinking of Tasso here, or of Gravina later: but the seventeenth and eighteenth century men are certainly in more danger of his judgment.

(perhaps on rather polygamic principles) to the student of oratory. Longinus had suddenly fixed her colours on his helmet, and had ridden in her honour the most astonishing little *chevauchée* in the annals of adventurous literature. The second greatest poet of the world had done her at once yeoman's service and stately courtesy. And yet she was, in the general literary view, not so much *déclassée* as not classed at all—not "out," not accorded the *entrées*.

This was now all over. The country which gave the literary tone and set the literary fashions of Europe had adopted Criticism in the most unmistakable manner — whether in the manner wisest or most perfect is not for the present essential. Rank thus given is never lost; at any rate, there is no recorded instance of a literary attainder for Kinds, whatever there may be for persons.

When this criticism passes the Alps, and we pass them with it, a curious difference is to be perceived. We leave the abstract side of the matter almost wholly behind us—the most abstract side perhaps wholly. A little of the Platonic generalities, relieved from the Platonic detraction, may be indulged in *pro forma*, and Vauquelin (in that odd familarity with Deity which the French have always displayed) may image God as a gardener ordering the garden of Poesy with trim walks, and neatly planted beds, and hedges, which must not be trespassed on, or from, or through. But the French attention almost wholly deserts such things for the mediate generalities of kind and form; and is constantly tempted to desert these also for the still lower and more particular questions of language, prosody, and style. The fact is, that the circumstances have entirely changed. The Italians, though they may not know it, are in a state of declining vitality and creative force as regards actual literature; even Tasso is an "old man's child" among their greatest. Besides, to do them justice, there is very little left for them to do with their mere means of language and the like. It is quite different with French and Frenchmen. If they are rashly neglectful (and Fauchet, Pasquier, and others are soon on the spot to vindicate them to some extent from

this neglect) of their further past, there is some excuse for impatience of the past that is nearer; and it is even natural and human, though far from praiseworthy, that they should scorn the once charming formal devices which latterly, in most hands, have been so destitute of charm. But make allowance as we may for the causes, the facts remain. French criticism is much the least important of the three divisions which we have considered in the foregoing book. Not only does it begin late; not only does it fail to be very fertile; but its individual documents require a certain kindness to speak very highly of their virtues, and a good deal of blindness to conceal their shortcomings. I have protested above against a too low estimate of the critical value of the *Défense et Illustration*. Its critical interest is really great, and its critical importance really high; but this greatness and this importance are scarcely absolute. They belong to it as to one of our very first pieces of *revolutionary* criticism—one of the first in which the newly hatched and fledged critical spirit of Europe shows itself of falcon breed, and sets out to fight and destroy as well as to build nests and hatch young in its turn. The censure of the *Défense* is very mainly unjust, and its positive doctrine, though generous, and, in the circumstances, not insalutary, is vague, not very far-sighted, and, at the very best, extremely incomplete. What saves it is, first, the abundant and conclusive evidence that it gives of the critic being actually abroad in earnest, of the time of mere acquiescence and tradition having ceased, of there being writers who are determined to attack some kinds of writing and encourage others with their very best will and power; and, secondly, the generous and uncompromising championship of the vernacular, which is the greatest glory of the Pléiade, and which, followed in other countries, gave us the great modern literatures. Du Bellay has the credit of bringing criticism, if we may so speak, nearer to her true object than almost any Italian critic of his own century had done, though he does not himself either practise or prescribe the best way of getting at that object.

The criticism of his colleague, or master, Ronsard, is, as we have seen, injured by its small bulk, by its rather fragmentary

character, by the fact that the most considerable piece of it has passed through another hand, and that we have only that hand's own testimony for the faithfulness of the rehandling, and by not a little decided inconsistency. But it has the same militant, practical spirit as Du Bellay's in quality, and more of it in proportional quantity. Moreover, it is extremely *germinal*. Those[1] who contend that the classical French criticism of the seventeenth century was only the Pléiade criticism of the sixteenth, denying its masters, omitting some, if not always the worst, parts of their creed, narrowed in range, and perfected in apparent system, have a great deal to say for themselves. Nor can there be reasonable doubt that, though Du Bellay was the first to speak critically, the teaching was the teaching of Ronsard throughout. Of this teaching, the injunction to enrich the language by archaism, and dialect, and word-coining (even by reading the forgotten romances of Arthur), was the very best part, and the first to be discarded by the ingratitude of the rebellious disciples, Malherbe and those about him. The worst part, which was not discarded but retained, was the adoption of the Italian doctrines about the hybrid kind of "Heroic" or "Long" Poem. But in most points the criticism of Ronsard justifies itself by a real adherence, conscious or unconscious, to the practical ideals of the French.

These characteristics recur (to much greater advantage, because of its far greater bulk, and in spite of its flagrant desultoriness) in the work of Vauquelin de la Fresnaye. Here we have, put certainly not with much method, but with plenty of talent, and at no unsuitable length, the whole of the Italian teaching, in small points and in large, that had commended itself to the French mind up to this time, with such additions, adaptations, and corrections as vernacular needs had induced, or vernacular genius insisted on. We see in it, very decidedly, the obsession of the "long poem," which France was not to outgrow for two centuries. We see the tendency to burden criticism with innumerable petty "rules" (or with attentions to "licence" nearly as burdensome), which was also to beset

[1] M. Pellissier and others have taken this line.

the nation. And in general we see also what it may not be improper (in connection with a school so fond of neologism and word-imitation) to call the "pottering" tendency, which was the worse side of Pléiade criticism. Vauquelin has really a great deal to say, and much of what he has to say is sensible. He escapes many errors of his forerunners, more of his successors, and it is comparatively seldom that one feels inclined to put an absolute black mark against any of his suggestions or cautions. But the whole is not only formless, but also invertebrate. Vauquelin does not, like some of the Italians, confine himself to grave and lofty generalisations on the highest questions affecting Poetry. He does not, like others, or these same at other moments, take an orderly survey of detail according to a coherent scheme. He simply has, as the cant phrase goes, "a few remarks to offer" on much more than a few points.

It has been already said that this provisional, tentative, and somewhat ineffectual character is characteristic, and prophetically characteristic, of the school. The Pléiade did not, like Ronsard's slightly younger contemporary Spenser and his followers in England, set French poetry once for all on the path on which, with whatever minor changes, it was henceforth to go. Some thirty or forty years of never wholly successful experiment were succeeded by an unjust supplanting, and by another thirty or forty of random tentatives, corresponding in some ways to those of England nearly a century earlier. Only then did France fall into a way, not by any means of perfection, but sufficiently suited to her genius to enable her to travel fast and far in it. It is a serious thing for Pléiade criticism that we have from it no thorough examination of any part of French literature. No doubt such examinations are not the strong point of Renaissance Criticism. But generally there is more approach to them in Italian, with the scattered remarks of the critics on Dante and Petrarch, with the controversies about the *romanzi* in general and the *Orlando* and *Gerusalemme* in particular; there is more even in English, with the surveys, imperfect as they are, of the earlier Elizabethans over the past of poetry, with the literature of the "classical metres" quarrel,

with the (no doubt later) remarks of Ben on Shakespeare and others. The fault of Pléiade Criticism, in short, is that it is at once too particularist and too little particular.[1]

Crossing the Channel, as we lately crossed the Alps, we do not find a simple transmission of indebtedness. It would have been surprising, considering the strong intellectual interests of the Colet group, and the early presence in England of such a critical force as Erasmus, if this country had waited to receive a current merely transmitted through France from Italy. It is possible that, later, Gascoigne may have derived something from Ronsard, and it is quite certain that "E. K.'s" notes on the *Calendar* show symptoms of Pléiade influence, even in the bad point of contempt, or at least want of respect, for Marot. But it is exceedingly improbable that Ascham derived any impulsion from Du Bellay: it is certain, as we have seen, that he knew Italian critics like Pigna directly; and it is equally certain that, either by his own studies or through Cheke, his critical impulses must have been excited humanistically long before the French had got beyond the merely *rhétoriqueur* standard of Sibilet.

Hence, as well as for other reasons, English criticism develops itself, if not with entire independence, yet with sufficient conformity to its own needs. That practical bent which we have noticed in the French shows itself here also; but it is conditioned differently. We had, as they had in France, to fashion a new poetic diction; but it cannot be said that the critics did much for this: Spenser, as much as Coriolanus, might have said, "Alone I did it." They did more *in re metrica*, and it so happened that they had, quite in their own sphere, to fight an all-important battle, the battle of the classical metres, which was of nothing like the same importance in French or in Italian. In dealing with these and other matters they fall into certain generations or successive groups.

In Ascham and his contemporaries the critical attitude was induced, but not altogether favourably conditioned, by certain forces, partly common to them with their Continental contem-

[1] Some exception ought, perhaps, to be made for Pasquier: but not much.

poraries, partly not. They all felt, in a degree most creditable to themselves (and contrasting most favourably with the rather opposite feeling of men so much greater and so much later as Bacon and Hobbes), that they must adorn their Sparta, that it was their business to get the vernacular into as good working order, both for prose and verse, as they possibly could. And what is more, they had some shrewd notions about the best way of doing this. The exaggerated rhetoric and "aureateness" of the fifteenth century had inspired them, to a man, with a horror of "inkhorn terms," and, if mainly wrong, they were also partly right in feeling that the just and deserved popularity of the early printed editions of the whole of Chaucer threatened English with an undue dose of archaism.

Further, they were provided by the New Learning, not merely with a very large stock of finished examples of literature, but also with a not inconsiderable library of regular criticism. They did their best to utilise these; but, in thus endeavouring, they fell into two opposite, yet in a manner complementary, errors. In the first place, they failed altogether to recognise the continuity, and in a certain sense the *equipollence*, of literature—the fact that to blot out a thousand years of literary history, as they tried to do, is unnatural and destructive. In the second place, though their instinct told them rightly that Greek and Latin had invaluable lessons and models for English, their reason failed to tell them that these lessons must be applied, these models used, with special reference to the nature, the history, the development of English itself. Hence they fell, as regards verse, into the egregious and fortunately self-correcting error of the classical metres, as regards prose, into a fashion of style, by no means insalutary, as a corrective and reaction from the rhetorical bombast and clumsiness of the transition, but inadequate of itself, and needing to be counterdosed by the fustian and the familiarity which are the worse sides of Euphuism, in order to bring about the next stage. Lastly, these men looked too much to the future, and not enough to the past: they did not so much as condescend to examine the literary manner and nature even of Chaucer himself, still less of others.

In the next generation, which gives us Gascoigne, Webbe, Puttenham, and Sidney, the same tendencies are perceived; but the Euphuist movement comes in to differentiate them on one side, and the influence of Italian criticism on the other. The classical metre craze has not yet been blown to pieces by the failure of even such a poet as Spenser to do any good with it, the fortunate recalcitrance of the healthy English spirit, and at last the crushing broadside of Daniel's *Defence of Rhyme*. But it does no very great practical harm: and prose style is sensibly beautified and heightened. Some attempts are made, from Gascoigne downwards, to examine the actual wealth of English, to appraise writers, to analyse methods—attempts, however, not very well sustained, and still conditioned by the apparent ignorance of the writers that there was anything behind Chaucer, though Anglo-Saxon was actually studied at the time under Archbishop Parker's influence. Further, the example of the Italian critics deflects the energy of our writers from the right way, and sends them off into pretty Platonisings about the proud place due to poetry, the stately status of the singer, and other agreeable but unpractical aberrations. This tendency is much strengthened by the Puritan onslaught on poetry generally and dramatic poetry in particular. In all this there is a great deal of interest, and many scattered *aperçus* of great value. Gascoigne's little treatise is almost priceless, as showing us how English prosody was drifting on the shallows of a hard-and-fast syllabic arrangement, when the dramatists came to its rescue. Sidney, wrong as he is about the drama, catches hold of one of the very life-buoys of English poetry in his praise of the ballad. Daniel's *Defence* puts the root of the rhyme-matter in the most admirable fashion. But we see that the classics are exercising on all the men of the time influences both bad and good, and in criticism, perhaps, rather bad than good; that the obsession of Latin in particular is heavy on them; and that the practice, both Latin and Greek, of what we have called beginning at the wrong end lies heaviest of all.

Nothing will show this more curiously than the words in which Sidney anticipated (and perhaps suggested) Ben's censure

of Spenser's diction as to the *Shepherd's Calendar*, especially if we remember that this was said by a personal friend and by an ardent lover of poetry. That there is something to be said against the dialect of the *Calendar* all reasonable critics will allow. As a poetic language it is, at its best, but a preliminary exercise for the glorious medium of *The Faerie Queene;* it is awkwardly and in some cases incorrectly blended; and, above all, the *mere* rusticity—the "hey-ho" and the rest—is a dangerous and doubtful expedient. But observe that Sidney says nothing of this kind. He "looks merely at the stop-watch." Theocritus did not do it; Virgil did not do it; Sannazar did not do it; therefore Spenser must not do it. That his own elevation of a mere modern like Sannazar to this position of a lawgiver of the most tyrannic kind — of an authority not merely whose will is law, not merely whose prohibition is final, but whose bare abstention from something taboos that something from the use of all mankind for ever and ever,—that this did not strike Sidney as preposterous in itself, and as throwing doubt on the whole method, is wonderful. But even if he had stopped at Theocritus and Virgil, he would have been wrong enough. Here once more is the False Mimesis, the *prava imitatio*. Not only is the good poet to be followed in what he does, but what he does not do serves as a bar to posterity in all time from doing it.

There is another point in which Sidney and Ben are alike, and in which they may even seem to anticipate that general adoption of "Reason," of "Good Sense" as the criterion, which the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries claimed as their own, and which some recent critics have rather kindly allowed them. Sidney's raillery of the romantic life-drama, Ben's reported strictures on the sea-coast of Bohemia, and his certain ones on "Cæsar did never wrong," &c., express the very spirit of this cheap rationalism, which was later to defray a little even of Dryden's criticism, almost the whole of Boileau's, and far too much of Pope's. The ancients, to do them justice, are not entirely to be blamed for this. There is very little of it in Aristotle, who quite understands that the laws of poetry are not

the laws of history or of science.[1] But there is a great deal of it in Horace: and, as we shall see, the authority of the great Greek was, during the three centures which form the subject of this volume, more and more used as a mere cloak for the opinions of the clever Roman. Meanwhile, such books as those of Webbe and Puttenham, such an ordeal by battle as that fought out by Campion and Daniel, even such critical *jaculata* as those of Meres and Bolton,[2] were all in different ways doing work, mistaken sometimes in kind, but always useful in general effect.

On the general Elizabethan position, as we have seen, Jonson himself made no great advance: in fact, he threw fresh intrenchments around it and fresh forces into its garrison. We may even, contrary to our wont in such cases, be rather glad that he did not enter upon a more extensive examination of his own contemporaries, because it is quite clear that he was not at the right point of view for making it. But it does not follow from this that he was not a critic, and a great critic. No one who was not this could have written the Shakespeare and the Bacon passages—in fact, in the former case, only a great magnanimity and a true sense of critical truth could have mixed so generous an acknowledgment with the candid avowal of so much disapproval. And, as we have said above, even where Ben was wrong, or at least insufficient, his critical gospel was the thing needed for the time to come, if not for the actual time. By a few years after his own death—by the middle of the century, that is to say—seventy years and more of such a harvest as no other country has ever had, had filled the barns of English to

[1] Yet even he does condescend to it too much in his notices of "objections" towards the end of the *Poetics*.

[2] These judgments might of course be reinforced enormously by extracts from letters and poems commendatory, as well as from substantive examples, of Elizabethan literature, prose or verse. But this is just one of the points in which the constantly increasing pressure of material makes abstinence, or at least rigid temperance, necessary as we come downwards. Some very notable passages in creative works — Shakespeare's remarks on drama among the more, and Ben's on "men's and women's poets" among the less — are glanced at elsewhere: Webster's famous "catalogue *déraisonné*" (yet not wholly so) of his great companions, and his odd confession of inability to manage "the passionate and weighty *nuntius*," tempts fuller notice. But one must refrain.

bursting with the ripest crops of romantic luxuriance — its treasure-houses with the gold and the ivory and the spices—if sometimes also with the apes and the peacocks—of Romantic exploration and discovery. There was no need to invite further acquisition — the national genius, in Ben's own quotation, *sufflaminandus erat.* It was his task to begin the sufflamination: and he did it, not perhaps with a full apprehension of the circumstances, and certainly with nothing like a full appreciation of what the age, from its "*Tamerlanes* and *Tamerchams*" onwards, had done; but still did it. In his most remarkable book we see the last word of Elizabethan criticism, not merely in point of time, but in the other sense. Ben is beyond even Sidney, much more Webbe and Puttenham, not to mention Ascham and Wilson, in grasp; while, if we compare him with the Continental critics of his own time, he shows a greater sense of real literature than almost any of them. But, at the same time, he has not occupied the true standing-ground of the critic; he has not even set his foot on it, as Dryden, born before his death, was to do. In him, as in all these Renaissance critics, we find, not so much positive errors as an inability to perceive clearly where they are and what their work is.

Passing from the performances of the several countries[1] to the general critical upshot of the century, as we passed to those performances from the survey of individual works, we have already secured one perception of result. Criticism is once more constituted; it is constituted indeed much more fully, if by no means more methodically, than has ever been the case before. By the time of our last Italian writer, Faustino Summo (Vauquelin is accidentally, and Ben Jonson not so accidentally, later in the other countries, but neither represents a stage so really advanced), Criticism has, besides its ancient books of the Law, quite a library of modern prophets, commentators, scribes. The strings of authorities, so specially

[1] It has seemed better to reserve Sturm, Fabricius, and the few other critics of sixteenth-century Germany, till the next Book, for reasons there to be exposed. The reasons for similarly putting off the Spaniards have already been touched upon: and the minor nations do not press.

dear to the coming century, can be produced without any difficulty whatsoever: and however much these authorities may differ on minor points, their general drift is unmistakable. Isolated dissenters like Patrizzi may make good their own fastnesses; but the general army hardly troubles itself to besiege or even to mask them, it goes on its way to conquer and occupy the land. Of the constitution established, or shortly to be established, in the conquered districts, some sketch has been given, but a caution should here once more be interposed against taking the word "established" too literally. Still, all the dogmas of the Neo-Classic creed, its appeal to the ancients and its appeal to Reason or Nature or Sense, its strict view of Kinds, its conception of Licence and Rule, its Unities, are more or less clearly evolved. And fresh particulars — such as its sharp reaction from the allowance and even recommendation of terms of art, archaisms, &c., which had been partly adopted by some Italians and warmly championed by the Pléiade—are at hand. Indeed, the business of the seventeenth century is, according to the title which we have ventured to take for the next book, much more to crystallise what is already passing out of the states of digestion and solution—to codify precedent case-law—than to do anything new.

There is not only this important advance in at least poetical theory to be considered, but also an advance still more important, though as yet not formally marshalled and regimented, in the direction of critical practice—of the application directly, to books old and new, of the critical principles so arrived at. We have seen that, for good and sufficient reasons, there was not so very much of this in classical times proper, and that there was so little of it as to be almost nothing in the Middle Ages. It did not seem necessary, in the concluding chapters of the first volume, to multiply proofs of this, as they could have been multiplied, merely to display acquaintance with mediæval literature. To take two fresh ones here, each famous for other reasons, the well-known reference of Wolfram von Eschenbach at the end of the *Parzival* to the "unrightness" of Chrestien de Troyes' version, and the godly wrath which made "Kyot" set things in better order, contains no literary criticism at all;

the matter, according to the usual mediæval habit, is looked upon as a question of truth or falsehood, not of good or bad literary presentment. And when the equally well-known but anonymous scribe wrote jubilantly on the *Cursor Mundi*,

"This is the best book of all,"

it is as certain as anything can be that he was not thinking, as he might fairly have thought, of the not small skill in compilation and narration displayed in that mighty miscellany, but merely that it contained a great deal of useful instruction and pleasant history. In the notices of books and writers which accumulate during our present period this is more and more ceasing to be the case; it has in fact ceased to be so from almost the beginning.

Such an estimate as that given by Ascham as Cheke's of Sallust simply could not have suggested itself to any mediæval mind; the Humanist practice of the fifteenth century had—quite early in the sixteenth—made it natural enough, at least as regards ancient writers. And it was constantly becoming more and more common as to moderns. The Italians, in a limited and scholastic fashion, had begun it long before as to Dante; they continued it in regard to Boccaccio and Petrarch; they were spurred on to practise it more and more, first by the immense popularity of the *Orlando*, and then by the rival (and deliberately urged as rival) charms of the *Gerusalemme*. Compare for one moment the survey of books and authors which we quoted or summarised from the *Labyrinthus* in the last volume with that which we have analysed from Lilius Giraldus in this—the whole point of view, the whole method of handling, is altered. In France and England more specially, attempts, clumsy, limited, subject to whatever epithet of qualification any one pleases to apply, as they may be, are made to take a backward historical view of poetry at least; and when great work such as Ronsard's or Spenser's is produced, there is a real, if rudimentary, attempt made to judge it critically. By the time that we reach Ben Jonson—who no doubt has a strong tinge of the seventeenth century superinduced, by nature as well as time, on his sixteenth-century nativity—such *aperçus*

almost of the highest critical kind in their species, as those on Bacon and Shakespeare, are possible to at least the higher intellects,—it needs but a step to the very highest kind, such as that of Dryden on the same Shakespeare. That what we have called the crystallisation of a critical creed affects these estimates not always for the best is not of real importance—the point is that we have at last got them.

These are great things, but, still postponing criticism on this criticism as a whole, we may point out one or two drawbacks in it which already appear, and which are quite independent of individual inclination on the vexed questions of Classic or Romantic, Practice or Rule, Subject or Expression.

The first is that, to some extent unavoidably, but to a greater extent than that excuse will cover, the criticism which we have reviewed is criticism of poetry only. Most of it is quite openly and avowedly so. *Poetica, Poetice, De Poetica, Della Poetica, Della Vera Poetica, Art Poétique, Art of Poetry, Apology for Poetry*—these are the very titles of the books we have been discussing. When prose comes in at all, except on rare and mostly late occasions, it is only on questions more abstract or less abstract connected with poetry—"Whether Tragedy and Comedy may be written in Prose," "Whether Verse is necessary to Poetry," and the like. If poetry in ancient days was, though it received plenty of attention, sometimes injuriously postponed to oratory, it certainly now has its revenge. Oratory itself, though occasionally handled, obviously is so as a sort of legacy from the ancients themselves, from a sort of feeling that it would not be decent to say nothing about a subject on which Aristotle, and Cicero, and Quintilian have said so much. The formal Letter, being rather a favourite Italian institution, is not quite neglected; it receives some attention among ourselves from Ben. Whether History can or must give subjects for poetry is keenly debated; but the question is approached entirely from the side of interest in Poetry, not in History. At the very close of our period, we find so great a prose writer as Bacon doubting the solvency of vernacular prose; a little earlier we find Montaigne taking note of it chiefly, if at all, in regard to matter, Pasquier hardly taking notice of it at all.

This is unfortunate, because it tends further to perpetuate the mischievous absorption in Kinds, and to postpone the attainment of the position from which, though the difference between prose and poetry may be seen more sharply than ever, the common literary qualities of both, and the way in which they affect the delight of the receiver, are at last perceived. It is unfortunate, further, because it tends to prevent the enjoyment of the full advantages which the modern literatures are gradually giving to the critic in the very departments—the prose romance, the essay, and others—where ancient criticism suffered most from the absence of material.

Another drawback which it may seem captious, or ungenerous, or even childish, to urge, but which really has a great deal to do with the matter, is that, active as the period was in criticism, it did not produce a single very great critic practising on a great scale. Its four or five critics of greatest literary genius were (I exclude Bacon for reasons given, and Spenser hardly comes in) Ronsard, Du Bellay, Tasso, Sidney, and Ben Jonson. The two Frenchmen dealt with but a small part of the subject, and from but a special point of view; Tasso was mainly "fighting a prize," and his own prize; Sidney's was a very little tractate of general, if generous, protest, and entered into no applications; Ben's critical remains are un-co-ordinated notes. On the other hand, of the specially critical writers, Scaliger on the strictly erudite and strictly classical side, Castelvetro in a sort of middle station, and Patrizzi as a voice crying in the wilderness, are perhaps the only three who rise distinctly above mediocrity. And, as has been pointed out already, Scaliger is too much of a pedant, Castelvetro is a mere commentator, and Patrizzi a philosopher militant, who carries on one of his campaigns in the province of criticism.

The disadvantages of this are manifold. Not merely do we get no brilliant and, at least in appearance and claim, authoritative exposition of the subject, like that of Boileau or that of Pope later on the dogmatic side, like those of Dryden and Johnson on the illustrative and exemplifying; but the whole critical system comes into existence by a process of haphazard accretion—by (to repeat a metaphor already used) an accumulation

of individual judgments at common law. No doubt this gives a certain strength, a certain naturalness, to the creed when it is formed. It has not been foisted on the *communis sensus*—that *sensus* has been inured and trained to it. The extraordinary toughness and vitality of the resultant is very likely due to this. But it caused also some of that inconsistency and apparent irrationality which a system of common law almost necessarily contracts as it grows: and it was more and more driven to throw over these inconsistencies and irrationalities that cloak of factitious Reason, or Sense, or Nature which, by the eighteenth century, becomes the mere threadbare disguise of a decrepit Duessa.

If, and when, we arrive at the close of that century, after a somewhat shorter halt and survey at the termination of the seventeenth, when the deaths of Boileau and Dryden made a real break—we shall have to complete this necessarily partial view of the whole Neo-Classic dispensation. We have seen it here in its Period of Origins, and, without endeavouring to add too many strokes to the picture, we may point to the fresh illustration of that principle which has been adumbrated (I fear, from some remarks of good critics, with insufficient perspicuity) at the close of the last volume. We saw that the tendency of Greek criticism was good, because, whether it was perfect criticism in itself or not, it was exactly the criticism needed yet further to perfect the perfections of Greek literature; and that much the same was the case in Latin. We saw that the quiescence of Criticism in Mediæval times permitted the gracious wilding of mediæval art to flourish unchecked and fill the waste places of the field. But here we see a new thing, hinted at before, the opposition, that is to say, of criticism to at least the best creation. Sidney's dramatic criticism simply would, if it could, sweep Shakespeare from *rerum natura*, and he looks half askance at the work of his own familiar friend Spenser. Ben would put the "*Tamerlanes* and *Tamerchams*" in the dustbin. To that untamable Romantic luxuriance which makes the glory of English literature at the time, which gives French most of its actual strength, and which, in failing measure, still supports the pride of Italy, the general ten-

dency of Renaissance criticism opposes a perpetual "Thou shalt not." It is not too much heeded—that would have been disastrous; but it is heeded to some extent, and that is salutary. A kind of check is put on the too wild curvetings, the too meteoric flights, of Pegasus. There was always the danger that *Jeronimo* at the beginning and Cleveland at the end might have too truly expressed our own great age; that the odd word-coinage of the Pléiade, and the tasteless rococo stuff of French literature about 1640, might have done the same for France. Against this the critics raised unceasing voices; and, though the voices were sometimes those of geese, they really did something to save the Capitol.

BOOK V

THE CRYSTALLISING OF THE NEO-CLASSIC CREED

"*It is not enough that Aristotle has said so, for Aristotle drew his models of tragedy from Sophocles and Euripides; and, if he had seen ours, might have changed his mind.*"—DRYDEN.

CHAPTER I.

FROM MALHERBE TO BOILEAU.

THE SUPPLANTING OF ITALY BY FRANCE — BRILLIANCY OF THE FRENCH REPRESENTATIVES—MALHERBE—THE 'COMMENTARY ON DESPORTES'—WHAT CAN BE SAID FOR HIS CRITICISM—ITS DEFECTS STIGMATISED AT ONCE BY REGNIER—HIS 'NINTH SATIRE'—THE CONTRAST OF THE TWO A LASTING ONE—THE DIFFUSION OF SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY CRITICISM —VAUGELAS—BALZAC—HIS LETTERS—HIS CRITICAL DISSERTATIONS—OGIER AND THE PREFACE TO 'TYR ET SIDON'—CHAPELAIN: THE HOPELESSNESS OF HIS VERSE — THE INTEREST OF HIS CRITICISM — THE 'SENTIMENTS DE L'ACADÉMIE SUR LE CID'—PREFACES—'SUR LES VIEUX ROMANS'—LETTERS, ETC.—CORNEILLE—THE THREE 'DISCOURSES'—THE 'EXAMENS'—LA MESNARDIÈRE — SARRASIN — SCUDÉRY — MAMBRUN—SAINT-EVREMOND—HIS CRITICAL QUALITY AND ACCOMPLISHMENT—HIS VIEWS ON CORNEILLE—ON CHRISTIAN SUBJECTS, ETC.—ON ANCIENTS AND MODERNS—GUI PATIN: HIS JUDGMENT OF BROWNE—TALLEMANT, PELLISSON, MÉNAGE, MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ—THE 'ANA' OTHER THAN MÉNAGE'S, ESPECIALLY THE 'HUETIANA'—'VALESIANA'—'SCALIGERANA'—AND 'PARRHASIANA'—PATRU, DESMARETS, AND OTHERS—MALEBRANCHE —THE HISTORY OF BOILEAU'S REPUTATION—THE 'ART POÉTIQUE'—ITS FALSE LITERARY HISTORY—ABSTRACT OF IT—CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF IT—WANT OF ORIGINALITY—FAULTS OF METHOD—OBSESSION OF GOOD SENSE — ARBITRARY PROSCRIPTIONS — BOILEAU'S OTHER WORKS—THE 'SATIRES'—THE 'EPIGRAMS' AND 'EPISTLES'—PROSE: THE 'HÉROS DE ROMAN'; THE 'RÉFLEXIONS SUR LONGIN'—THE "DISSERTATION ON 'JOCONDE'"—A "SOLIFIDIAN OF GOOD SENSE"—THE PLEA FOR HIS PRACTICAL SERVICES—HISTORICAL EXAMINATION OF THIS—CONCLUDING REMARKS ON HIM—LA BRUYÈRE AND FÉNELON—THE "DES OUVRAGES DE L'ESPRIT"—GENERAL OBSERVATIONS — JUDGMENTS OF AUTHORS—FÉNELON: THE 'DIALOGUES SUR L'ELOQUENCE'—'SUR LES OCCUPATIONS DE L'ACADÉMIE FRANÇAISE'—AND ITS CHALLENGE TO CORRECTNESS—THE ABBÉ D'AUBIGNAC — HIS 'PRATIQUE DU THÉÂTRE' — RAPIN—HIS METHOD PARTLY GOOD—HIS PARTICULAR ABSURDITIES AS TO HOMER IN BLAME—AS TO VIRGIL IN PRAISE—AS TO OTHERS—THE READING OF HIS RIDDLE — LE BOSSU AND THE ABSTRACT EPIC — BOUHOURS — EN-

CYCLOPÆDIAS AND NEWSPAPERS—BAYLE—BAILLET—THE ETHOS OF A CRITICAL PEDANT—GIBERT—THE ANCIENT AND MODERN QUARREL—ITS SMALL CRITICAL VALUE.

THE causes of the transference of the course of critical empire, northwards as well as westwards, from Italy to France, in the seventeenth century, lie (except in so far as they will body themselves forth in the plain tale of this course which follows) somewhat outside the plan which has been traced for our History. They belong, in part at least, to that "metacritic" and guesswork which we endeavour to exclude. Indeed, as usually, and more than as usually, in such case, the old puzzle of "the egg from the Owl, or the Owl from the egg?" besets us specially in this division of the History of that Art for which some have had it that the bird of Pallas is a specially suitable symbol. We can see the importance of the establishment of the French Academy, when only the first third of the century had passed, of the extraordinary influence of coteries like that of the Hotel Rambouillet, of the coincidence of the towering ambition of a youthful king and the concentrated force of his at least partially reunited kingdom, with the existence of a remarkable knot of great men of letters, including one critic of the most masterful, if not quite the most masterly, type. But can there possibly be any causation in this latter coincidence? Can we say why Conrart's Academy, instead of lasting for a time and then breaking up, became a national institution? why the Rambouillet blue-stockings were more influential than those who haunted Mrs Montagu's peacock-room, or put rubbish into the Bath-Easton vase? Only by guessing, or by arguing in stately circle about national temperaments. And we endeavour to avoid both these things here.[1]

The supplanting of Italy by France.

[1] I am not aware of any History of the subject of this Book as a whole: nor even of any devoted to French seventeenth-century Criticism extensively but exclusively. The nearest thing to this latter is M. Bourgoin's excellent *Les Maîtres de la Critique au 17ème Siècle* (Paris, 1889), giving studies of Malherbe, Chapelain, Saint-Evremond, Boileau, and La Bruyère. For the inevitable, though tedious, quarrel of Ancients and Moderns, H. Rigault's book on the subject (Paris, 1859) is, and is likely to remain, a standard. Monographs are, of course, innumerable; and the very large proportionate

Brilliancy of the French representatives.

What is certain is, that while on the one hand Italy is scarcely less addicted to criticism, and scarcely less fruitful of critics, in the seventeenth century than in the sixteenth, and while the authority of Scaliger, Castelvetro, Minturno, Piccolomini, is felt[1] all over Europe, the contemporary practitioners of the art exercise no such authority, and are of almost the least importance. A page for every score that we gave them in the last Book will nearly suffice in this. In France, on the other hand, no part of the century is not full of the critical labour, and no part is without critics to whom, whether we grant the epithets "good" or "great" or not, we cannot possibly refuse those of "important," "influential"—in more than one or two cases even "epoch-making." In the first generation we have the half-revolution, half-reaction of Malherbe, who, for good or for ill, determined the main course of French poetry for two whole centuries, and great part of that course, for three. In the second we have the similar work in prose, of Balzac by counsel and example, by example of Descartes and Pascal; the contest over the *Cid*, and the purblind but still intentionally business-like investigations of Hédelin-d'Aubignac; the constant debates of the Academy: and, perhaps most important of all, the general *engouement* for literary discussion of pedant and fine gentleman, of prude and coquette alike. From the third come the ambitious code-making of Boileau; the squabble, tedious and desultory, but in intention at least wholly critical, of the Ancients and Moderns; the immense collections of Baillet and others; the work, not bulky but full of germ and promise, of Saint-Evremond, Madame de Sévigné, Boileau, La Bruyère, Fénelon. What century earlier (some may say, what century later) will give us, in any country, a critical galaxy like this, where the stars dart,

space given in the usual French literary histories to this period, makes these specially pertinent. Two of the largest volumes of M. Petit de Julleville's book, for instance—with ample bibliographies—contain the seventeenth century only.

[1] Felt rather than acknowledged, it is true. We by no means uncommonly find hard words used of Scaliger, whose Homerophobia shocked orthodox French critics of this time more than his Virgiliomania conciliated them. Yet they owed him almost everything.

in at least most cases, so many other rays besides those of criticism?

Malherbe.

It is possible—as the historian of such a subject as this could wish that it were possible oftener—to do justice to Malherbe's undoubtedly prominent position in the history of criticism without wasting much space on him. The universally known phrase of Boileau,[1] though containing an innuendo of the grossest critical injustice, and led up to by a passage of astounding historical ignorance or falsification, is yet substantially true. The stage of French poetry which Malherbe started was a new stage; it was a stage not at once, but before long, acquiesced and persevered in by all but the whole population of the French Parnassus; and it cannot be said that seventy years of almost unceasing effort have done more than partially substitute a fresh one. Further, it is undoubtedly in favour of Malherbe, though the compliment may seem a left-handed one, that he was not a man of commanding genius in any way; that he left no important critical work; that his creative work is very scanty, far from consummate as a rule, and by no means all in the style he himself approved; and that even the secondhand accounts which we have of his doctrines are scrappy, vague, and indirect. For it is quite clear that a man who exercises such influence, and exercises it practically at once, in such circumstances, must have hit upon the right string, must have coincided strangely with the general feeling, temper, aspirations, taste of his countrymen. Our documents for these doctrines are an extensive, but fragmentary, commentary on Desportes (the still more destructive and characteristic handling of Ronsard seems either to be a myth or never to have been preserved on paper), the *Life* by Racan,[2] some phrases in the *Letters*, the vivid and admirable attack of Regnier,[3] and the remarks of writers in his own and the next generation.

[1] *Enfin Malherbe vint.* The edition in the *Grands Ecrivains*, by M. Ludovic Lalanne (5 vols., Paris, 1862-69), is not only by far the best, but in our case indispensable, as giving the full commentary on Desportes.

[2] The *Historiette* of Tallemant (ed. Monmerqué, i. 236-278) is apparently based upon a fuller version of Racan, and must be compared.

[3] In the Ninth Satire (*v. infra*). Regnier was Desportes' nephew, and is

All concur in showing Malherbe to us as, on the one hand, mainly a verbal critic, and on the other, as verbal critics usually, but by no means always or necessarily are, singularly unable to rise above the word, or its nearest neighbour, the mere sense. Both these things made him the natural enemy (though, for his earlier years at least, he was a more or less disloyal follower) of the Pléiade. Their abundant word-coinages and word-borrowings shocked him; he did not want, and could not feel,[1] the poetic *souffle* which they managed to give by means, or in despite, of their vocabulary. Racan, a rather simple but absolutely honest creature, confesses that his master *n'aimait du tout les Grecs*, regarded Pindar especially as a maker of *galimatias*, liked Statius and Seneca best of the Latins,[2] and (it was generous) classed the Italians with the Greeks. On the other hand, in French, he had at least the merit of knowing exactly what he wanted, and exactly how to get it. He it was who first invented those rigid laws of rhyme, which even French classicism never quite adopted—the proscription of the different use of *a* and *e* in such rhymes as *ance* and *ence*, *ent* and *ant*; the rule against simples and compounds of them, and even words which commonly go together, out of verse, as *père* and *mère*. He was equally rigid on the cæsura: and Racan is not to be suspected of catering for laughers, though Tallemant might be, when he tells us that, while actually in the death-struggle, Malherbe revived himself to tell his nurse that she had used a word *qui n'étoit pas bien Français*.

It is, however, in the Commentary on Desportes,[3] and there

said by the anecdotists (see last note) to have been incensed against Malherbe, not merely by the latter's literary opposition to his uncle, but by a piece of gross rudeness of Malherbe's to Desportes in the latter's own house, where Regnier himself had introduced him.

[1] The French critics, however, have perhaps taken too literally his reported blasphemy, that he did not value a good poet above a good player at ninepins. Malherbe was a Norman—that is to say, a parcel-Englishman—and may well have had something of that English humour of disparaging his own matters which is so incomprehensible to the French.

[2] The version in Tallemant adds that he *dis*liked Virgil. He also scoffed at the idea of "number" (rhythm) in prose.

[3] Ed. Lalanne, iv. 249-473. There is an elaborate and standard monograph on this by M. Brunot, *La Doctrine de Malherbe* (Paris, 1891); but, as in other cases, I am obliged to postpone the comment to the text.

only, that we have the real Malherbe at first hand for our purpose. It is a very remarkable piece, and the first of the kind in modern times;[1] though Gellius and Macrobius no doubt set a certain pattern for it in ancient. Nor am I acquainted with anything more thorough in the particular species; the modern Zoilus, as a rule, is equally inferior to Malherbe in thoroughness, acuteness, and learning. More than 200 pages—a large page and a small type—are occupied in M. Lalanne's edition (the only one) with the citations and remarks, the former being rigidly confined to the line or two (rarely more) that Malherbe annotated. It would be almost worth while to reprint[2] the original volume as it exists scored by the critic's hand, and I do not know that it would be at all unfair to Desportes; for it is not the author who comes worst out of the exposure.

The Commentary on Desportes.

Whatever may be said against Malherbe, he cannot be accused of verbiage. He constantly contents himself with a single word — *bourre* ("padding"), *cheville* ("expletive"), or simply *note* or *nota*, which expresses, much more forcibly, the "Will the reader believe," or "It will hardly be credited" of our less succinct Aristarchs. It is curious how sensitive Malherbe's ear is to certain suggestions of real or fancied cacophony, or absurdity, in juxtaposition of different words. There is no doubt that the French habit of delivering verse in a sort of recitative or singsong, running the syllables very much together, putting strong emphasis on certain vowels and slurring others, makes things like the famous "vaincu Loth" and "vingt culottes," "vieillard stupide" and "vieil as de pique" less of mere childishness with them than with us. Malherbe seems to have a perfect obsession of this kind, especially in

[1] There are things of Castelvetro's in the *Opere Varie* not wholly dissimilar; but these were then unpublished.

[2] I have sometimes wondered whether the fact that, according to the Racan-Tallemant anecdote, Malherbe only "struck through" his copy of Ronsard without annotating it, is not an involuntary testimony to the Prince of Poets. Malherbe, for all his rancour and narrowness, was no fool; and he must in his mind have anticipated a famous later sentence about the eagle floating

"Beyond the arrows, shouts, and views of men."

Desportes is not exactly an eagle, and Malherbe has better game with him, but still not the best of the game.

the direction of alliterated syllables. Thus he annotates the harmless line—

"Si la foi plus certaine en une âme non feinte"—
n'en, nu, n'a;

and, still more in the style of the two later jokes—

"Mais vous, belle tyranne, aux Nérons comparable"—
Tira nos nez!

Indeed, he never loses an opportunity of blackmarking this collocation of letters in different words, a point to which the later Latin rhetoricians had perhaps made the French specially attentive, but notice of which, except in the rarest cases, would be thought unworthy of anybody but a schoolboy (or a comic journalist of not the highest class) in England.

It was perhaps a little dangerous for Malherbe to be so prodigal of the words "pedantry" and "stupidity" as he is; while time and use have sometimes made his peremptory judgments look rather foolish. For instance, Desportes had used *poumons* in the plural, as we have practically always used "lungs" in English. "On ne dit," says our usher, with an almost audible bang of the ferule on the desk,—"On ne dit point qu'un homme ait des poumons: et ne m'allègue pas qu'il y a plusieurs lobes au poumon, car tu serais un sot." Poor posterity! It has been (in France) tolerably docile to Malherbe, but it has in this respect undoubtedly written itself down an ass—or perhaps him. For no Frenchman now would hesitate to use the word in the plural. He is constantly objecting to *consommer* in the sense of *consumer;* he ejaculates (with the sort of indignant bark which we hear so often from him and from critics of his kind) on

"Et pensant de mes faits l'étrange frénésie"

"Je ne sais si c'est allemand ou anglais: mais je sais bien que ce n'est pas français"; stigmatises (surely with injustice?) *trop injuste Amour* as a *mauvais vocatif,* and shows his own want of poetic imagination and poetic sympathy by scouting as bad the beautiful epithet *amoureuse* in

"Enflammant l'air d'amoureuse clarté,"

for which some of us would excuse Desportes many worse things than he has actually done. On the other hand, the mere grammarian comes out in his note on

> "Où de tant de beauté ton œil eut jouissance
> Que le seul souvenir chasse au loin ma souffrance,"—
>
> "*Le seul souvenir de quoi?*"

I should rather like to give more of this; but the reader will no doubt say *Sat prata.* We must not be too hard on it. In the first place, it is (as criticism of the Zoilus kind is by no means always) transparently honest criticism. Malherbe does not garble; he does not foist his own misconception, not to say his own stupidity, on his author, and then condemn him for it; he does not, like Boileau, fling offensive and contemptuous epithets broadcast without anything to support them. Further, there can be not the very slightest doubt that such an office as his could, at the time, be very usefully filled. The French sixteenth century, like our own, had poured, and the early French seventeenth century had, also like our own, begun to pour, a vast and rather indiscriminately selected reinforcement of word and phrase and image into the language. All this wanted sorting, arranging—in some cases, though no doubt not in so many as Malherbe thought, rejecting and clearing out. The mere French grammar, which Vaugelas was soon to write, had not been written; and the Arts Poetic in existence were, as we have already seen, either technical and higgledy-piggledy, or like that of Vauquelin (which appeared just as Malherbe was beginning his crusade, and of which it would not be uninteresting to have a copy annotated by him as he annotated Desportes), almost as higgledy-piggledy, and much vaguer, on all technical points except some of the crotchets of the Pléiade. Indeed, the best justification for Malherbe is the French poetical history of the next thirty or forty years. He may claim some, though but little, of the merit of such different poets as Corneille and Voiture; the defects, where they really existed, of Boileau's victims can seldom or never be charged upon him, and might sometimes have been avoided by listening to his precepts.

What can be said for his criticism.

This, I think, is fairly generous as well as just; generosity may now make her bow and leave justice unfettered; but justice herself need not go beyond that admirable pronouncement of Regnier, which has been already referred to. The great satirist, the passionate poet, could hardly have needed a personal grievance to spur him on to the composition of his Ninth Satire, though the generosity of his character might have induced silence had not Malherbe broken their friendship. The address to "Rapin[1] le favori d'Apollon et des Muses"[2] begins by graceful compliments, but turns soon and sharply on

Its defects stigmatised at once by Regnier.

> "Ces resveurs dont la Muse insolente
> Censurant les plus vieux, arrogamment se vante
> De reformer les vers."

If we have given Malherbe the credit of being the first modern critic to play the awful Aristarch with a contemporary in the true and full Aristarchian manner, Regnier must deserve that of being the first poet of genius in modern times to undertake a real *chevauchée* in the interests of the true criticism against the false. The Satire is not faultless; there is some divagation, and an attempt (giving some countenance to the deplorable excesses, in the opposite direction of insulting poverty, which Boileau and Pope permit themselves) to set the profits and prosperity of Desportes

His Ninth Satire.

[1] Not to be confounded with the critic and versifier, René Rapin, who was not born till after Regnier's death, and whom to call "favourite, &c.," would indeed have been a dreadful thing to do; still less with the historian Rapin de Thoyras, who was a generation later again. This Rapin was Nicolas, part author of the glorious *Satire Menippée*, victor in the burlesque contest of the Flea (see Southey's *Doctor*), a good versifier in Latin, and no ill one in French, though he was of the (in France not very numerous) partisans of classical metres. He died in 1608, not long after the date of this satire.

[2] I read my Regnier in two editions, both very desirable as books, and of different merits otherwise. The one, that of Prosper Poitevin (Paris, 1860), is very compact; and, besides other matter, has the old commentary of Brossette, which is extremely interesting as expressing the views of a disciple of Boileau on a poet whom, to do him justice, Boileau could not but admire, though he characteristically belittled him. The other, that of E. Courbet (Paris, 1875), has a text adjusted in the scrupulous modern manner, and some important additions to the biography.

against the comparative neediness of Malherbe. But this neediness was only comparative; and Regnier has the good taste never to name his adversary, and to let the arrows find their mark without vulgar personal abuse. The spirit of the piece is delightful; its straight hitting never baulks the game; and the verse is often of the very first quality. Read—I only wish I had room to quote—the passage, which only Juvenal and Dryden have equalled, on Malherbe's contempt alike of the Greeks and the Pléiade (20-27); that on his elevation of the mere vernacular, as the test of language, which follows; the denunciation of his arrogant assumption of knowledge as being his own peculiar, which follows that; and the famous diatribe of forty verses long, and with every other verse a triumph, which scoffs at the anxiety—

"Prendre garde qu'un *qui* ne heurte une diphtongue,"

which labels the whole proceeding—

"C'est proser de la rime et rimer de la prose;"

compares it to the tricks of rouging and dressing up in women, and contrasts the natural beauties of poetry with all this powder and pomatum.

The first hundred lines are the best part of the satire, and the remainder is, to a certain extent, amplification and repetition. Yet it is good art, and good sense, not merely in the scattered phrases—

"Sans juger nous jugeons,"

and

"Votre raison vous trompe, aussi bien que vos yeux,"

and

"O débile raison! où est lors ta bride,"

which hit at once the foible and the forte of the criticism of the century; but in the final sting—

"Mais, Rapin, à leur gout si les vieux sont profanes,—
Si Virgile, le Tasse, et Ronsard sont des ânes—
Sans perdre en ces discours les temps que nous perdons,
Allons comme eux aux champs, et mangeons des chardons!"

One might write a whole essay on these wonderfully prophetic and (no doubt to the writer half-unconsciously) many-sided[1] lines. After two centuries Europe did "go to the fields"—and she found something better to eat there than thistles.

For the moment, as we have seen before in other cases, the voice crying in the wilderness found only a wilderness to cry in. Men could not mistake the vigour and verve of Regnier's verse, but they either disregarded his doctrine or misunderstood it. Malherbe was their music-maker then; they understood *him*.[2] In the contrast of these two we have practically a contrast which subsists to the present day, and which we do not find by any means so sharply accentuated in ancient criticism—that of the critic who looks only at the stop-watch, and of the critic who looks beyond it; of the critic of form and the critic of spirit. But the curious thing is that for the last three centuries the antagonists have behaved exactly like Hamlet and Laertes, or even like that puzzling pair in the lower circles of the *Inferno*. They take from time to time each other's parts, each other's weapons, and renew the contest with changed persons, or at least rapiers. At first sight it may seem as if Malherbe and, after him, Boileau were simply insisting on form and expression; as if Regnier, and those who at longer intervals have followed him, were those who say that "all depends upon the subject." But a more accurate acquaintance with the History which is to follow will show us that this is far from being the case. Malherbe had so little opportunity of shaping, or took such little trouble to shape, his critical ideas that it is perhaps the safer way not to draw up any complete creed for him, as M. Brunot and Mr Spingarn have done. But in Boileau, as we shall see, there is a distinct attempt, which has been practically

The contrast of the two a lasting one.

[1] For instance, the *yoking* of Virgil, Tasso, and Ronsard. This Pisgah-sight of literature was what the Renaissance, and the whole neo-classic period, almost invariably failed to attain.

[2] There was, however, a remnant. Even Balzac called him "Le tyran des mots et des syllabes;" even Chapelain recognised (acutely enough) the fact that his methods were rhetorical rather than poetical; even Tallemant practically summed him up, once for all, in the words, "Il n'avait pas beaucoup de génie: la méditation et l'art l'ont fait poëte." But the majority and the hour were with him.

followed by all of his side since, to prescribe expression, subject, spirit, and everything—to insist not merely that the work shall be good, but that it shall be good according to sealed patterns, in choice of subject as well as in method, in method as well as in form, in form as well as in language.

The diffusion of seventeenth century criticism.

There can be very little doubt that the private discussions which, as we know from Racan, Malherbe used, for years before his death, to hold with Racan himself and others, and the letters which he also exchanged with younger men, had a very great deal to do with the wide development of criticism in the second third of the century. The fact of this development is certain; it is vouched for by the appearance of literary subjects in the *Ana*, and in Tallemant's *Historiettes*, by the foundation of the Academy, by the *Cid* quarrel, practically by almost everything we know of the time that concerns literature. But we must deal, according to our wont, with the matter *par personnages*. Of such personages we have, in the first place, Vaugelas, Balzac, Ogier, and Chapelain, to whom we may join Ménage, Gui Patin, Tallemant himself, and the far greater names of Saint-Evremond and Corneille. Then we can take Boileau—at least in reputation one of the culminating points or personages of our history—and the less exclusively critical deliverances of La Bruyère, of Fénelon, and of Malebranche; can give some account of the Quarrel—tenacious of life, if scarcely vivacious—of the Ancients and Moderns; diverge to the scholastic and somewhat dismal but important performances of La Mesnardière and others, of Hédelin and Le Bossu, Rapin and Bouhours, and end by some account of the miscellaneous compilations and observations of journalists and *savants*. The matter is abundant in all conscience; it is at least sufficiently varied, and the real greatness of some at least of the persons concerned should save it from being insipid.

We may all the better pass directly from Malherbe to Vaugelas[1] because this is about the last place in this *History*

[1] Those who wish for something more on this subject, without attacking Vaugelas for themselves, may be strongly recommended to the full and excellent article of M. Brunot in Petit de Julleville (vi. 674-690), one of the very best papers in the book.

where we can give special attention to *merely* verbal and grammatical criticism. In this Malherbe had at least the absolute, and almost admirable, courage of his opinions. On the one hand he transfers the prudery of the Ciceronians (*v. supra*, p. 12) to French, and will not allow even an analogue such as *accroît* on the strength of *surcroît*. On the other he bars all the delightful Pléiade diminutives, likes not technical terms, is so horrified at any indelicate suggestion that his countrymen really need not have ridiculed our "sho[c]king," and has a whole black list of "plebeian" expressions. Everything is to be "according to rule," and the rule is to be drawn with as few exceptions as possible—and with as few inclusions.

Vaugelas.

It is no wonder that Regnier opened the full broadside of his magnificent poetical rhetoric against this system; and it is only a pity that nobody less fantastic than Mlle. de Gournay—Montaigne's *fille d'alliance*, and almost the first as almost the oddest of blue-stockings—took up the parable more practically against it. But the set of the tide, as we have said, was with him. La Mothe le Vayer, a little later, in his *Considérations sur l'Eloquence Française de ce temps* "transacts," though he is on the whole on the side of liberty. And *enfin Vaugelas vint*, the Savoyard[1] who was to teach France French. His famous *Remarques* did not appear till 1647, when he was fifty-two, and only three years before his death, but the book expresses work much older.[2]

Vaugelas, to do him justice, has not the "pistolling ways" of Malherbe. Usage is his standard, but, as in the old jest, the coin is no sooner in the child's pocket than he is told not to spend it. It is *good* usage only that you must follow; and the goodness of course is *penes nos*. It would be neither interesting nor proper here to discuss Vaugelas' merely grammatical precepts, but it is permissible to point out that he, first of all moderns—or at any rate more than any early modern—contributed to bring about the disastrous idea that grammar exists

[1] He is often called this, but not quite fairly, for he was born in Bresse.

[2] For other grammarian-rhetoricians of 1610-1660 see M. Brunot as above. On the *Art Poétique* of P. de Deimier (1610), compare also Rücktaschel *ubi sup.*

independently, instead of being a generalisation, partly from the usage which even great writers cannot violate, partly from their own. But it is worth observing that, according to him, you must not use technical words, popular words, improper words (it is dreadful to say "breast," for do we not talk of a "breast of mutton or veal"?), poetical words in prose, archaisms, neologisms, which last he hates more than anything else. And when he comes to style, Purity, Clearness, Sobriety, and so forth are of course his cardinal virtues.

Balzac.

Jean Guez de Balzac, who, in the rather idle nomenclature of traditional literary history, has usually been styled "the Malherbe of French prose," is on the whole more important in the history of French style than in that of French criticism. He was not, as we have seen from the phrase quoted above, by any means an indiscriminate admirer of his correspondent—in fact, though not exactly a Gascon,[1] he was enough of a Southerner to feel nettled at the Northern arrogance which undertook *dégasconner la France*. But he was himself an ardent disciple of "purity," and the principal objection that even posterity has made to his *Socrate Chrétien*, his *Aristippe*, his *Prince*, and most of his elaborate Letters, all of which were fanatically admired by contemporaries, is that they are scarcely more than pieces of epideictic, with very little substance in them.

His Letters.

These same letters, moreover, contain numerous critical passages; while a whole division of his *Works*[2] is critical. The interest, however, of the most literary part of the *Letters*, those to Chapelain, as a whole, is not so much on Balzac's side as on Chapelain's; and the subjects of them will, at any rate in part, be best treated when we come to discuss that (in the latter part of his own lifetime and since) much-enduring writer. To Bois-Robert Balzac confides (III. 7) that he only cares for verses as he does for melons—both must be in absolute perfection if they are to please him; also that the philosopher's stone will be found as soon as the sort of eloquence that *he* values. The thousand pages of the

[1] He was born in Angoulême.

[2] Pp. 509-689 of the second of two stately folios (Paris, 1665). The *Letters* are in the first.

Letters are sprinkled with finery of this sort; but better matter is not very common. The somewhat hollow elegance which the French allow to be the chief merit of Balzac does not lend itself well to real criticism: nor, to do him justice, does he much attempt this, even to men of letters like Conrart, Heinsius, Descartes, or to Chapelain himself. Sometimes he drops into verbal criticism, as in VI. 57, where he consents to call Mlle. de Gournay herself *traductrice* and *rhétoricienne*, but not *poétesse* or *philosophesse*. The letter to Scudéry in reference to his attacks on *The Cid* is very sensible and in good taste; but (as Balzac indeed generally is) much more ethical and "gentlemanly" than æsthetic (XII. 20). Even when he writes directly to Corneille (XVI. 9) about *Cinna* he cannot get much beyond elegant generalities as to this Rome being the Rome *de Tite Live*. So that it is not surprising, when we come to the Chapelain Letters themselves (of which, besides a few stray ones earlier, there are six entire Books, XVII.-XXII.) that although most of them touch literature, and many contain critical remarks or judgments,[1] there is little of much interest. Only now and then do we come across such a refreshment as: "Why, sir, what prodigy do you tell me of? Is it possible that any one with a drop of common-sense in him can prefer the Spanish poets to the Italians? and take the visions of a certain Lope de Vega for reasonable compositions?" (XX. 127). His remarks on Ronsard and Malherbe, "the Martyr and the Tyrant" (XXII. 20), are fair, and with room one might extend the anthology. But on the whole, though Balzac was a very handsome letter-writer, and could, and did, give all the Frank Churchills of Europe lessons in that art, he was not very much of a critic.

His Critical Dissertations.

His set Critical Dissertations quite confirm this verdict. He opens them with a great deal about Discipline, *Justesse*, *Bienséance*, the Mean, and the like. He tells us (vol. ii. p. 537) that any one who likes Ariosto would prefer a Siren to a beautiful woman—the answer to which

[1] Balzac himself rather mincingly deprecates this word. "Je ne donne" he says to Chapelain (XX. 25) "jamais de jugement; mais je dis quelquefois mon avis."

challenge may be justly suspended by the true critic till he has a Siren produced before him. There might be much to be said for her. He has some not unpleasant remarks on the obligatory subject of the great sonnet-duel between Voiture's "Uranie" and Benserade's "Job": but he has not, so far as I remember, discovered the critical truth that their beauty lies in the singular charm of the *first* line of the one and the *last* of the other. He is in one place (ii. 597) almost savage with Montaigne, of whom he says that, though he be adopted father to Mlle. de Gournay, esteemed by Father Paul, and "*allégué par le Chancelier Baccon*" (*sic*), he can see nothing in his Essays but equivoques and mistakes of judgment. This, however, is said chiefly in reference to Montaigne's Latinity and knowledge of Latin: and elsewhere (pp. 657-662) there is a set judgment much more favourable, though still smacking of the double prejudice against a prophet of his own country and a man of the last generation. But his Dissertation on or against the Burlesque[1] style, when one remembers the excesses in which, from Scarron down to Dassoucy, men were about to indulge, is not contemptible: and there are amusing things in his *Barbon*, a sort of elaborate Theophrastian portrait of a young pedant, from which Scriblerus may have borrowed.

Ogier and the Preface to Tyr et Sidon.

Vaugelas, as we have seen, did not finally elaborate his work till some twenty years after Malherbe's death, and Balzac, though a correspondent of the Norman poet, outlived him by more than a quarter of a century. But in the very year (1628) of that death appeared a document on the other side, and taking that side

[1] With this it is interesting to compare the disquisition written to Balzac, and apparently at his request, *De Ludicra Dictione* (opening his *Opera*, fol., Amst., 1709) by François Vavasseur, a Jesuit Professor, who also wrote not a bad book on *Epigrams* and some other literary work, besides sermons and theological treatises. Vavasseur is at once refreshingly logical and audacious. The Greeks (he is bold enough even to face the retort of "Aristophanes"?) did not use *ludicra dictio* or burlesque language. Nor did the Romans: for Lucilius *desideratur* (scarcely so much as to warrant the conclusion to those who know the fragments well), and as for Petronius and Apuleius, decent people never mention *them*. Secondly, the ancient critics give no precepts for it. Thirdly, there is no reason for using it. Fourthly, there are many reasons for *not* using it. So that is settled. One may like Vavasseur.

in flank at the point where it was, with the majority, to be most victorious. This was the *Preface* of François Ogier to the second edition of the *Tyr et Sidon* of Daniel d'Anchères, or rather (for this is a mere anagram) Jean de Schélandre.[1] The play is almost the only worthy representative, in French, of that English-Spanish drama which set the Unities at defiance;[2] the Preface, written twenty years after the first appearance of the play, but seven before the author's death, is a brief but extraordinarily remarkable vindication, in principle, of Schélandre's practice. Until M. Asselineau, in 1854, published an article on the subject, and the *Bibliothèque Elzévirienne*, two years later, included both play and preface in the eighth volume of the invaluable *Ancien Théâtre Français*, both were practically unknown. Even then notice of them was for a long time confined to literary historians; and of late an attempt has been made to put the *Preface* aside as the mere freak of a student, in opposition to the taste of the time and the necessities of the stage. That the general course of literature in France followed for a time the line which Ogier argued against, and to which Schélandre ran counter, is perfectly true. But this is quite indifferent (except as a matter to be registered) to history, which knows perfectly well that Athanasius and his world are always changing places and principles. Moreover, it is quite a mistake to think that Ogier writes merely from the study, and with no consideration of the stage. Like Cinthio, like Patrizzi, like Castelvetro himself, he is no mere study-theorist. On the contrary he carries the war into the enemy's camp with a refreshing audacity and no small force. It is the *classical* arrangement, he says, which *offense le judicieux spectateur*, with its improbable and unnatural coincidences and tallyings. How, he asks, in a passage interesting to compare with Sidney's satirical description of the opposite style, do the identifying rings, the shepherd-fosterers, the good old nurses, always turn up *comme par art de magie* exactly at the right moment? How

[1] Some authorities give *this* as the anagram, the other as the name. But it does not in the least matter.

[2] The Pleiad tragedies (*v. supra*, p. 127) had been Senecan, but not quite "regular"; and though Hardy broke loose from Time and Place, it was not always very violently.

is it that Creon, and the old attendant of Laius, and the Corinthian who picked Œdipus up, all rendezvous at Athens in the nick of time? Is verisimilitude observed even in the *Agamemnon?* Is there anything dramatic at all—anything more than sheer narration—in the *Persæ?* Can the extreme defenders of the Unity of Time work out the *Antigone* on their lines? or the *Heaütontimoroumenos?* Then he proceeds to account (not at all badly) for the practice of the ancients, and then to revert to the only sound argument—that of Cinthio and Pigna in the matter of the *Romanzi,* of Il Lasca in reference to Italian comedy—that Athens and Rome, and the lives and customs of both, are *not* modern countries and their lives and customs, that the practice of the one can give no final and prohibitive rule to the practice of the other.[1]

We are not in the least concerned to argue for this Preface. It is enough to point out its bold and independent spirit, and to lay special stress on the fact that Ogier fully admits that he is defending, if not a heresy, an orthodoxy which is not popular, offers to explain "pourquoi nous nous sommes jetez à quartier du chemin ordinaire," speaks of the Unity of Time as "'cette règle que nos critiques veulent nous faire garder si religieusement à cette heure," indirectly condemns the Unity of Place in his arguments, and vindicates the full tragi-comic blending of Actions. Now, this was in 1628, eight years before the *Cid* and the *Sentiments de l'Académie,* even a year before Mairet's *Sophonisbe* earned the reputation of being the first French piece that was absolutely "correct." This is of itself enough to show how erroneous is the idea, once common and still repeated, that the discussion over the *Cid,* with Scudéry for mover, was in the nature of a surprise, and that Chapelain, if he most certainly did not invent the Unities, introduced them into France.

Although M. Bourgoin, and one or two others, have done something of late years to relieve Chapelain himself of the weight—not so much of obloquy as of contemptuous ignoring—which rested

[1] Ogier, like his Italian predecessors, is firm on the pleasure-giving quality of dramatic art. His manner is well illustrated by his remark that the constant arrival of messengers is more suitable to a good inn than to a good tragedy. One wonders whether he knew the Spaniards (*v. inf.* ch. 2).

on him for nearly two centuries, even they have for the most part lain under that curious fear of Boileau which we shall have to notice so often. Sainte-Beuve (who knew his French seventeenth century as no other man ever has known, or probably ever will know it, and who had in his own possession the *MS.* Letters which do Chapelain not a little credit) takes a kind of apologetic tone on the subject, and seems never to have made up his mind to treat Chapelain as a whole. It is, indeed, only on the prose side that he can be approached without fear of disaster. There are good things even in the *Pucelle*, but they are ill to win. You may read Le Moyne, Desmarets, Saint-Amant, not without satisfaction of the true poetic sort, especially in the first case. I think I once got through some part of Scudéry's *Alaric*. But the *Pucelle* has a double touch-me-not-ishness—of *niaiserie*, and of what Boileau (for once justly) calls "hardness"; there is something really impregnable about her. And the minor pieces—fine as is the Richelieu Ode in parts—hardly save their captainess.

Chapelain: the hopelessness of his verse.

Chapelain as a critic is quite another person. He still writes somewhat heavily: and (among his other faithfulnesses to the Pléiade[1]) goes in the teeth of Malherbe and Vaugelas by his use of classicised words. But he almost deserves the name of the first properly equipped critic of France in point of knowledge: and (shocking as the statement may appear) I am not sure that he was not the last, till almost within the memory of an aged man. Not only did he know Italian literature thoroughly—that was not in his time uncommon for Frenchmen—and Spanish—that also was not far to seek—but he was accurately drilled in the theory and practice of Italian criticism. He is constantly referring to it in his correspondence with Balzac; he (that is to say, the transparently identical author of the main part at least of the Censure of the *Cid*) not merely rests his objections on these

The interest of his criticism.

[1] His mother was deeply devoted to this school, and had in her youth known Ronsard personally. The gibing part of the anecdote about the author of the *Pucelle* being "bred a poet" was never very funny, and is now more than very stale. The historical part remains and flourishes.

critics, but refers to the controversies over the *Gerusalemme* and the *Pastor Fido*, as he does elsewhere to that between Castelvetro and Caro. Above all, he, almost alone of his time, knew old French literature. It has not been noticed, I think, either by M. Feillet, who published, or by M. Bourgoin, who discusses, his most interesting and remarkable dialogue, *Sur la Lecture des Vieux Romans*, that his devotion to *Lancelot* was almost certainly one of his debts to Ronsard. For the Prince of Poets, as we saw, expressly enjoined the reading of *Lancelot* and the other romances in order to enrich the vocabulary.

The Sentiments de l'Académie sur le Cid.

The blot on Chapelain's critical record in the general estimation is, of course, his[1] Censure of the *Cid* above referred to. Even those who admit that critical like other thought is free, and that a critic is not to be sentenced to Malebolge because he is unfortunate enough not to like the great work of a great man, must acknowledge a certain striking poetical justice in the spectacle of the censor of the *Cid*, for want of correctness, being pitilessly flogged thirty years later by a correcter than he. Nor, nowadays, do we admit much excuse in the undoubted fact that this censure was practically forced on the Academy, and on Chapelain, by the sordid jealousy of Richelieu.

But even in this censure it is possible, even for one who frankly puts Corneille at the head of all French Tragedy, to acknowledge some critical merits. The first (not perhaps quite the least) of these is that it is strictly *civil;* the second is that, meticulous, purblind, peddling, prudish—a score of similar epithets if you please—as it is, it does adopt an intelligible code of critical judgment, and does apply that code with legal propriety. Moreover, as we have seen, it is quite a mistake to represent this code as being invented for the occasion—suddenly

[1] It is formally the Academy's and not his. But there is no real doubt that nearly all of it expresses his sentiments, and that much of it is actually his in language. The whole history of the *Cid* dispute is minute and complicated, and may be found in many books. The persons chiefly responsible for it, besides Richelieu and Chapelain, were Georges de Scudéry, an eccentric failure of a genius, Mairet, a playwright of talent, and Claveret, one of none. In all cases, it is to be feared, the extraordinary success of the piece was the exciting cause.

foisted upon France to gratify the envy of Scudéry and Mairet, or the less excusable malignity of Richelieu. The code had been growing for more than a century; it had been gaining wider and wider acquiescence every day; the protests against it, however gallantly made, had fallen practically unheard. Eight years before we have Ogier explicitly admitting it as the code of *nos critiques*—as the accepted opinion. We may be fully entitled—some of us intend, for us and for our house, to do so, whether entitled or not—to hold the Unities things vainly invented in two cases, and mischievous, if exclusively and universally enforced, in the third.[1] We may think the objections to Corneille's diction hypercritical, and the objection to Chimène's conduct utterly absurd.[2] But Chapelain, and those about Chapelain, were also quite entitled to think differently, and there is no reason to believe their opinion feigned, though they might not have put it so forcibly save to curry favour with the Cardinal. After all, Corneille hardly disputed their verdict except in detail; and, whether luckily or unluckily, tried to do as they told him afterwards.

Prefaces.

Chapelain's other critical exercises are numerous: they are quite interesting, and there ought to be some accessible collection of them, for at present they have to be hunted up in half-a-dozen different books or collections, some of them very hard to get at. It is probable, though disputed, that he wrote the Introduction to a translation of *Guzman d'Alfarache*, which may have been done in his twentieth year, and in which the author (according to the Pléiade view) by no means magnifies his office as translator. He certainly wrote, some years later, the prefatory panegyric to Marini's *Adone*,

[1] Of course there is much to be said for them, rightly understood, from the point of view of mere *theatrical* arrangement: while mediocre writers are more safely to be trusted with than without them. But we are speaking of *literature*, not the theatre; and in literature the weak brother is rather a nuisance to be extirpated, than a person to be provided for, or conceded to.

[2] M. Jules Lemaître's article on the subject in Petit de Julleville (iv. 273 *sq.*) most ingenuously cites the virtuous authority of M. Dumas *fils* in support of Chapelain, and is not far from opining in the same sense. It is always difficult for a Frenchman to pardon an honest love. If Chimène had been married and Rodrigue her gallant, it would have been quite different. She might have overlooked the blood of 20,000 fathers.

where he practises, in a fashion familiar to students of Italian criticism, an elaborate scholastic division of kinds and qualities, with definitions and connections of them. We need not trouble ourselves with his Academic discourse, against Love and for Glory, which is full of *précieuse* personification, but pass to his most interesting works, the *Dialogue on the Romances* and the critical *Letters*. In the first[1] he maintains the case of the Arthurian romances against Ménage and Sarrasin, not with a thorough-going championship (that would be wholly anachronistic), but with singular sense, knowledge, and even, as far as it goes, appreciation. He does not affect to admire the composition or the style in *Lancelot*. But he knows something of the origin (it is extraordinary that he allows it to be, in part at least, English). He will not allow that, barring style and expression, there is any necessary gulf between *Lancelot* and Homer (wherein he is a hundred years ahead in sense of Blair, who was a hundred years ahead of him in time), delights (taught to do so, as we said, by Ronsard) in the vocabulary, and feels and rejoices in the point of honour ("la crainte perpetuelle qu'ils ont de rien faire et de rien dire dont leur reputation puisse souffrir la moindre tache"),[2] their jealousy of their word, their devotion (so different from "our *galanterie*") to their ladies. *Quia multum amavit!* Moreover, the document is connected in a rather fascinating manner with another,[3] in which the same interlocutors, with others, appear, which refers to it, and in which not only does Sarrasin confess that he had been brought by Chapelain to a state of mind different from that which is to be seen in his *Discours* noticed below, but Chapelain himself reinforces his argument with a long citation from, and discussion of, an episode in *Perceforest*—that huge and interesting romance which is almost inaccessible to modern readers, in consequence of the depraved persistence

Sur les Vieux Romans.

[1] *De la lecture des Vieux Romans*, ed. Feillet, Paris, 1870. Unfortunately printed in very small numbers, but still obtainable for less than half its weight in silver.

[2] It is really refreshing to find Mr Burke saying ditto to M. Chapelain some 150 years afterwards, in a sentence as well known to all the world as that in the text is unknown to all but a few.

[3] *S'il faut qu'un Jeune Homme soit Amoureux.* Sarrasin, *Œuvres, ed. cit. inf.*, 139-235.

of modern scholars and Societies in reprinting the same text in idle emulation of each other, instead of giving what are practically *anecdota*.

Letters, &c.

The Letters (published, with some omissions, by M. Tamizey de la Roque in 1880, and supplemented fourteen years later by some more in the Transactions of a learned Society[1]) are crammed with references to books, and contain not a little real criticism. And lastly, the famous list[2] of characterisations of French men of letters which Chapelain drew up for Colbert's use in allotting pensions, though it has been laughed at in parts, is for its date (some of its subjects, including Molière, had not yet done anything like their best work) as sound, as sensible, and, at the same time, as benevolent a hand-list of the kind as you shall discover in the records of the centuries.

On the whole we may say that Chapelain only wanted the proverbial "That!" to make a good and perhaps a really great critic. Not all, though a good deal, of the deficiency must be put down to the transition character of time, taste, literary diction, and everything, in midst of which he found himself. The point of critical genius, the ability to grasp and focus and methodise, must have been wanting too. But he had knowledge, both of literature and of criticism; he had obviously catholic, if not unerring, sympathies; he had acuteness and penetration, if not quite combination and the architectonic; and he was entirely free from that ill-nature which, while it may seem to assist the critic, really disables him. *Critique manqué*, perhaps, on the whole; but still on his day a critic and no mean one.

Corneille.

"Il faut observer l'Unité d'action, de lieu et de jour. Personne n'en doute." But, out of France at least, and perhaps in it, it is possible that few people may know, or even doubt, whence this saying comes. It would be an insult to a Frenchman of letters to tell him that it comes from Pierre Corneille; long, it is true, after the debate over the *Cid*, but nearly a quarter of a century before the close of his glorious,

[1] *Mémoires de la Société de l'Histoire*, vol. xxi., Paris, 1894.

[2] This, with other things, will be found in Chapelain's *Mélanges de Littérature* (Paris, 1726).

if not too happy, life. It may be gathered—rather from a long and large induction than from any single utterance of a person of importance—that the French do not think very much of Corneille as a critic; it may be further gathered from this that a man should never submit his genius. *Tu contra audentior ito* is the counsel of wisdom. He has written much the best things that have been written in favour of the "correct" theory; but its partisans (and small blame to them) suspect him. They see the eyes of Chimène behind the mask, and they distrust them—wisely also after their kind.

But we must not rhapsodise here on the admirable poetry of this great poet, and the way in which the critics not merely, as somebody said in his own day, *ont tari sa veine*, but made him in a way false to it. We have only to do with his actual criticism; and whatever view we take of the general question, it must be here pronounced great criticism of its kind. The three *Discours*, and the series of *Examens* which appeared first in 1660, present an almost unique, an extremely touching, and (to men of English birth) a rather incomprehensible instance of a man of supreme genius crouching and curbing himself to obey the tendency of the time and the dictates of "the wits."[1] *We* are not kneaded of this dough. We cannot even conceive Shakespeare taking a copy of Sidney or going to Ben, and afterwards constructing dramas as regularly as he could, or apologising for their irregularity; Milton adjusting *Paradise Lost* to Dryden's views of rhyme; nay, even Dryden himself (who is in some ways, as we shall see, very close to Corneille) "looking first at the stop-watch" in any way. But "things are as they are," and (a great saying from which sometimes the wrong inference has been drawn) "their consequences will be what they will be."

The three Discourses, "De l'Utilité et des parties du Poëme Dramatique," "De la Tragédie," and "Des Trois Unités," and the *Examens* of the different plays, are the result of this submission.[2]

[1] Tennyson paid almost greater heed to his critics in detail; but he never made any formal or general concession.

[2] They will be found in all good editions. I always use the best, that of M. Marty-Laveaux, where the *Discours* appear conveniently, if chronologically out of place, in Vol. I., and the *Examens*, each at the head of its own play.

Let us say at once that it is in no sense the mere submission of a man who recants, either with tongue in cheek or simply under fear of rack and gallows and fire. Corneille (and this is the interesting point of the French temperament as contrasted with the English) is really affected by authority, and by the *Zeitgeist*. He has been honestly converted; indeed he asserts (and we may believe him to a great extent) that he never needed conversion — it was only his green unknowing age that made him go wrong. In the three Discourses he examines the question with plentiful quotations from Aristotle, with some knowledge of Italians like Castelvetro and Beni, and of others like Heinsius and Pacius. He is quite aware of the weak points of the ancients; he repeats, though he does not much dwell upon, the earlier comments on the singular rapidity with which Agamemnon[1] follows the beacon-fires, the astonishing patness of the turning up of the Corinthian in the *Œdipus*. And to any one who thinks little of Corneille as a critic I should like to prescribe the reading, marking, and inwardly digesting of his remarks in the *Discours des Trois Unités* on the separation of acts and scenes, and the relation of the chorus to orchestral interludes. Elsewhere we may find the mark of the chain: as where the poet, pretending indifference, is evidently rather unhappy because he cannot tell exactly what the wicked Queen in *Rodogune* (which some have thought his best play next to the *Cid*) was doing when she was not on the stage. This inquiry is of itself almost sufficient to show the sheer idiocy to which this kind of criticism is always on the point of descending. But on the whole, and since Giant Unity has long ceased even to gnash at the pilgrims, we can tolerate it.

The Three Discourses.

The *Examens* are of still greater importance; for we have had plenty of inquiries in general into the qualities and requirements of Kinds, though few from persons like Corneille. The system of elaborate critical reviews

The Examens.

[1] Let me, for one has always to guard these things, observe that no charge is here brought against the *Agamemnon*, which is perhaps the greatest tragedy in the world out of Shakespeare, and almost worthy to be ranked with Shakespeare's best. It is of the folly of the commentators that Corneille was, and that I (*quam longo intervallo post Cornelium!*) am, thinking.

—for that is what it comes to—of his past work, by a great poet who has taken pains to acquaint himself with critical method, and is almost too respectful of its utterances, is practically a new one. There is a certain flavour of it in Spenser and Ronsard, much more than a flavour in Tasso; but it was not till the seventeenth century, when the critic was abroad in earnest, that it could be done on such a scale as this. For Corneille, though he never issued any *Examens* till 1660, applied them to all but his very latest plays. To the mere general reader they may be rendered distasteful by the elaborate and most pathetic pains which Corneille takes to adjust himself to the theories which his reason docilely accepted, but to which his faith was always secretly recalcitrant. To the student of him, and to the student of criticism, they must always have a great attraction.

But for the latter, if he have but a little of the "rascally comparative" spirit, they have an attraction greater still. There is no doubt at all that they served as pattern, at a very brief interval, to the critical exercises of Dryden, and thereby opened a way which criticism is treading still. And there is more in them besides this accidental and extrinsic attraction. Corneille, though he really shows extraordinary impartiality as well as great acumen in his examinations, was by the mere force of nature driven to stick close to his actual work, to observe it narrowly, if only so as to put the best face on it. And, as we have seen, the great fault both of ancient and of mediæval criticism was the omission or the refusal to consider individual works of art minutely and exactly—the constant breaking off and escape to the type. The natural partiality of authors for their own work has not always been fortunate in its results. Here it was so.

La Mesnardière—Sarrasin—Scudéry.

Although we have had, and shall have, to question the exact importance assigned by some to the *Cid* quarrel, there can be no doubt that it had a very important influence, extending far beyond the chief parties concerned, and helping, very particularly, that popularisation of criticism which is undoubtedly the work of France in general, and of the French Academy in particular. In the years almost immediately succeeding it we have, for 1639, the

Discours de la Tragédie of the ingenious and ill-fated Sarrasin, for 1640 the formal *Art Poétique* of La Mesnardière, a treatise specially dealing with tragedy, strongly, almost idolatrously, Aristotelian in tone, and characterised by a lively polemic against the Spanish and Italian influences which had been so powerful for a generation in France. Scudéry followed up the pamphlets which had actually given occasion to the *Cid* dispute, almost at the same period, with the Preface to *Ibrahim*, as well as years afterwards in that to *Alaric*. Nay, it was at this very time (about 1640) that the world was at least threatened with the birth of the dullest critical treatise of the century, that of Hédelin, though a respite of seventeen years was actually granted.

La Mesnardière had evidently made a careful study of the Italian critics. His very *format*—a handsome small quarto—reminds one of their favourite shape, and contrasts curiously with the tiny duodecimos of the sixteenth-century French critics. And he puts forth his whole strength in arguing for the Stagirite against the blasphemies of Castelvetro, whom, however, he declares that he honours *hors des intérêts d'Aristote*—an odd, but very characteristic, way of putting it. La Mesnardière, who follows out all the Aristotelian divisions, even to Music (with engraved airs), is equally odd and equally representative in identifying, or at least associating in his first Chapter, *Politesse* with "Imagination." Mere Understanding will make a Philosopher—the Poet must be polished up into an Imaginative condition. He does not neglect language and diction: and though he devotes himself to drama, illustrates copiously from non-dramatic poetry, and criticises his illustrations in the way which was becoming so common and is so important. But a specimen passage in a footnote[1] will explain, better than pages of discussion, the fatally parasitic character of most of his criticism.

The Sarrasin and Scudéry documents are complementary as well as complimentary of this and of each other. For Sarrasin's

[1] *Art Poét.*, p. 233. "Si toutefois la Fable est telle que le Poëte n'ait pas lieu d'y recompenser la Vertu, il doit pour le moins faire en sorte que les Personnes vertueuses soient louées publiquement."

Discours[1] is devoted to Scudéry's *Amour Tyrannique*, which is so perfect that Aristotle would have put it in the *Poetics*, instead of or beside the *Œdipus*, if he had only known it. And La Mesnardière is just going (see dates given) to write "divinely" on that art of poetry which those great men, Ronsard and Du Bellay, did not know, and therefore recommended the study of Romances.[2] Finally, "Armand" [Richelieu, of course] is *le Dieu tutélaire des lettres*. As for the great Georges de Scudéry himself, his Prefaces to *Ibrahim* and *Alaric* are quite worthy of the "Commander of the Fort of Notre Dame de La Garde and Kept-Captain to the King," whose portrait guards the entrance of the stately folio of *Alaric*. That is to say, they are an odd mixture of bombast (he leads off that to this book with a list of critics and poets, all of whom he has read), crotchet, and real wits. Both are worth comparing with Davenant's to *Gondibert* (*v. infra*, p. 367), which came between them.[3]

Mambrun.

Some years later the uncompromising Aristotelianism of La Mesnardière as to the Drama was continued and straitened yet further, in reference to the Epic, by Pierre Mambrun,[4] who was, like so many others of these French seventeenth-century critics, a Jesuit. His principles (which he illustrated later by a *Constantinus sive De Idolatria debellata*) exhibit the French detestation of compromise in the

[1] In his *Œuvres* (Paris, 1694), pp. 301-344.

[2] This is very interesting in connection with Sarrasin's appearance in Chapelain's dialogue and his own other work (*v. supra*, p. 260).

[3] Scudéry thinks Four things necessary to Epic—the authority of History, the observance of received Religion, the exercise of Poetic Licence in Fiction, and the provision of Great Events. He is not uninteresting for his connection with his sister's prose Romances, in which he had some, if not much, share, and which he never forgets. Also, he clings to the Pléiade technicalities to some extent—kindly, however, explaining such words as *Hunc*, *Quille* (which, he says rather quaintly, is *un bois courbé qui est au plus bas d'un vaisseau*), and *Calfater*. The *Ibrahim* preface, thirteen years earlier, exhibits the same obliging explanation of technicalities, and the same virtuous adherence to The Rules. "Provided," he says, "that an Architect takes his measures right, he is assured of the beauty of his building," which would seem to dissuade any one from advancing beyond the packing-case style of architecture. And he is sure that a Romance, like an Epic, should never go beyond one year in time.

[4] *De Poemate Epico*. Paris, 4to, 1652.

most agreeable light: whether his practice does not also illustrate the non-epic character of the French head is another matter. Aristotle, and the whole Aristotle, so far as the *Poetics* go, is Mambrun's motto; if he cannot add "nothing but Aristotle," that is merely because his text is admittedly meagre as to Epic. But he does what he can. He has read Scaliger and Voss, and has a proper respect for them as learned men, but he is shocked at both for their worshipping of idols—at Scaliger for wasting time on diction and metre, as well as for falling foul of Homer, at Voss for making the persons instead of the action the centre of Epic. On the other hand, the too famous Petronian passage is to him a kind of inspired post-script to the *Poetics*. In his handling of Poetry, which for him is first of all Epic Poetry, he is scholastic as to the frame. The Material cause is Action; the Formal cause the Fable; the Efficient cause a combination of Prudentia and Furor Poeticus; the Final Cause *not* pleasure but the making of statesmen. In all these respects Homer and Virgil are perfect —Statius, Lucan, Ariosto, Tasso, sinners. The former always observe the Unity, the Integrity, the Magnitude of the Action. Mambrun has satisfied himself that the Action of the *Odyssey* only includes fifty-five days—on which principle one would cheerfully undertake to write an *Arthuriad*, to include the whole of Malory and more, on an "action" of the time between Agravaine's detection of Lancelot with the Queen and the last fight in Lyonnesse. He thinks that a woman may be a heroine of tragedy but cannot be of Epic (which seems unkind to Chapelain). He admits that to distinguish between the Action and the Fable is not easy; that even in Aristotle the two are sometimes identical. But properly the Fable is *actio culta et ornata*, and he has an ingenious receipt for stripping the matter of episodes and names. Epic is not Art, not Logic, not History; it is "Prudentia." But *Furor Poeticus?* Mambrun's section of *Furor Poeticus* is by far the most interesting in his book. He distinguishes first the Kinds of Fury. Then he points out that the Epic Poet must not be furious in constituting his fable. Very much the reverse. "But in episodes and descriptions and speeches I shall not

deny that a little fury may be sprinkled in"[1]—the fury-dredger, or poetic cruet, being thus authoritatively established as an implement of the Bard. Nor does he conceal the process. The poet thinks very hard about an episode, a description, &c. Then the black bile warms itself, flies up, inflames the brain, and the poet is poetically furious. But in another memorable passage, "being strong in black bile will not necessarily make you a poet."[2] [Alas! it will not.] There must be discipline, &c. In short, the book is a precious one.

Saint-Evremond.

There are few critics—not such by profession, and not precisely of the very highest rank—who, from the very first, and with an unbroken record, have enjoyed such a reputation as has been constantly maintained by Saint-Evremond.[3] Nor is there, perhaps, a single one who has better deserved this constancy on the part of the great inconstants, Time and Fortune. He was commended to his own time scarcely more by birth and station as a fine gentleman and soldier, or by his singular political and personal history, than by the admirable quality of his writing; to the eighteenth century by his touches of scepticism and libertinage; to the Romantic revival by his championship of Corneille against Racine, and by the *frondeur* spirit which made him resist the tyranny of the classical creed. But it is also true that he has purely critical qualities of a very uncommon kind. It is perhaps a testimony to that spice of universal in him which has been noticed, that the particular stamp to be put on these qualities—the particular class to which Saint-Evremond is to be referred—is not quite matter of agreement among those who fully agree as to his general merits. To M. Bourgoin, for instance, his critical spirit seems to be nearer to that of Boileau

[1] *Aliquantum furoris aspergi non negaverim.—De Poem. Ep.*, p. 269.

[2] *Neque tamen si quis atra polleat bile . . . continuo is in poetis censendus est, nisi accesserit disciplina*, &c.—Ibid., *post.*

[3] There is no absolutely complete and authentic edition—that of Desmaiseaux (frequently reprinted in the fifty years after the author's death, from 3 vols. 4to at London, 1705, to 12 vols. 12mo at Paris, 1753) was at least authorised. The critical matter will be found well arranged in the 2nd vol. of Giraud's *Œuvres Mêlées de Saint-E.* (3 vols., Paris, 1865). I may refer to an essay of mine, first published in the *Fortnightly Review* for July 1879, and reprinted in *Miscellaneous Essays* (2nd ed., London, 1895).

and the critics of rule than to that of Fénelon, or even La Bruyère, and the critics of impression and *sens propre*. To me the approximation seems to be in the other direction.

His critical quality and accomplishment.

The acute and learned author of *Les Maîtres de la Critique* has, I think, been a little deceived by superficial characteristics of form and method. A young man of twenty at the date of the *Cid*, and the battle over it, Saint-Evremond, fine gentleman as he was, no more forgot the forms of the quarrel than the attractions of the play. He has something a little scholastic, something of the earlier century, in his manner. Perhaps the best piece of criticism which he has left us—the *Dissertation sur le mot "vaste"*—recalls the known or alleged subjects of the earlier conversations of Malherbe and Racan, and their fellows, the later of Vaugelas and Chapelain and the young Academy. We have a formal *Jugement sur Senèque, Plutarque, et Pétrone*, a quite academic study of *Alexandre le Grand*, discussions of the character of tragedy generally, and the like. But the accomplished, agile, and independent spirit of the author is perpetually escaping from the restraints of his forms and models, and taking its own way according to its own taste. Perhaps, indeed, the fatal equivocation or ambiguity which seems to beset so many critical terms has worked here also: for to the present day the word "Taste" seems to excite quite dissimilar ideas in different minds. To some (as to Boileau and his followers it certainly did) it seems to suggest an antecedent law, a bar to which subjects are to be brought, something to which it is almost improper to apply the terms "good" or "bad," because there is only one taste, and anything else is not taste at all but *un*taste. In this sense, though he might not have allowed it, I do not think that Saint-Evremond ever judged by "taste." In the other—where taste means the approbation and satisfaction of a competent judge, well-gifted, well-tried, and taking pains to keep his palate clean—I think he always judged by it. That he often gave reasons for his judgment is nothing; one should *almost* always do that. But one should always also remember that these reasons may be totally inapplicable to the next instance.

Saint-Evremond, we have said, was a great admirer of Corneille, and a steady champion of him against Racine. His admiration has been set down to the mere "fallacy of first love," as we may call it—the fact that the youth of the poet and the youth of the critic had coincided. This is not fair. Inviolable constancy to first loves is not precisely the chief thing in an Epicurean temperament. Saint-Evremond, in his various utterances on the subject, makes it perfectly clear *why* he preferred the older to the younger poet; and Cornelians and Racinians alike must agree that, whether his conclusions were right or wrong, his considerations were at any rate genuine and adequate. The variety and vigour of the one as opposed to the somewhat monotonous mould and soft (or, as some said, "creeping") sentiment of the other, form a real difference: and so throughout.

His views on Corneille.

On what was then a burning subject—one which cannot be said to have been quite put out, though its ashes only smoulder —the suitableness of religious and especially Christian subjects for epic and drama, &c., Saint-Evremond's opinion is a little tainted by his undoubted "philosophy," to use the word which had already become fashionable for the various shades of unbelief. But either from this cause, or from a general critical spirit, he escapes the inconsistency (in which Boileau for instance is entangled) of contending that the *deorum ministeria* are capital things in ancient, and very bad things in modern, poetry. His remarks on the theory of Purgation are a little irreverent but by no means irrational; and he makes strong play for the contention (of which, if he did not invent it, he was one of the strongest and most original champions) that "Admiration is a tragic passion" worthy of being seated beside Pity and Terror, and necessary to be kept in sight even when we deal with Love.

On Christian subjects, &c.

In respect of the Ancient and Modern dispute—of all three stages of which, *v. infra*, his long life made him a contemporary, while he actually took a sort of skirmishing part in the two earlier—his position is distinctly that of a true critic. From what has been said already it will be clear that he could not be an out-and-out

On Ancients and Moderns.

Ancient; but he is as little a Modern of the Perrault type. One sees that the Moderns gave him most pleasure, and in the Ancients whom he really likes, such as Petronius (supposing no merely unworthy motives to have entered into the preference), it is easy to discern the modern element. But in neither case does he "like grossly" and in the lump; he has his reasons and his affinities, and can state both easily. He is even not very far from that "horizontal" view of literature, without deceptive foreshortenings and distances, which is, up to his time, so rare. Nothing is more striking than his remarks on English literature—at least the English drama. Perhaps he did not himself know much English; and something of the kind seems to be insinuated in Dryden's remarks[1] on the matter, though Dryden was naturally hurt at the selection of Shadwell for commendation. But if so he apprehended what Waller and others said to him about Ben Jonson's comedy with almost miraculous divination, and reflects in his account of our tragedy rather less than the current mistakes on the subject among Englishmen of the Restoration period themselves. And here also, as in his remarks on Spanish and Italian, is noticeable this same horizontal and comparative spirit.

On his treatment of Opera I may be permitted to repeat what I wrote more than twenty years ago, that it really contains the substance of everything that has been said since on the literary side of the matter. As for the "Vaste" dissertation the best thing to say is *Tolle, lege.* I do not think it possible to have a better example of that rarest of things, literary philology, in the true and not the distorted sense of the substantive. The Academy opined—in fact had opined already (whence much of the salt of the piece)—against Saint-Evremond. But his Dissertation is, like all his criticism more or less, a really extraordinary example of the combination of all that was best in the French academic spirit with freedom from most of its faults. This union of freedom and delicacy, of precision and independent play, is Saint-Evremond's glory as a critic, and it distinguishes him, not merely from Boileau, but from most others between 1660 and 1800. Addison had (and

[1] *V. inf.*, p. 385 note.

no doubt directly borrowed) something of the same touch; Fénelon, in a different spirit, had a great deal: we shall find something of it in Gravina. But it is very rare in the period, and it is precisely the absence of it as a "compensation balance" which vitiates neo-classic criticism as a whole.

Gui Patin—his judgment of Browne.

It is common, if not universal, to glance at the redoubtable and satiric doctor, Gui Patin, as at least an outlier among French seventeenth-century critics; but the reader who, as Matthew Arnold says, "wants criticism" will not find much of it in his very amusing *Letters*.[1] An *English* reader may be specially disappointed because he is most likely to know the surprising, the repeated, the, to all appearance, fully genuine, and the very felicitous remarks[2] of Patin on the *Religio Medici*. A Frenchman who can appreciate Browne, who can see in the *Religio* a book not merely *tout gentil et curieux* but *fort délicat et tout mystique*, who can perceive its *étranges et ravissantes pensées*, who can pronounce *il n'y a guère encore de livre de la sorte* (alas! we may drop the *guère* and continue the *encore*), who can describe the author as a *mélancolique agréable en ses pensées*, who can say of his stupid commentators *ce livre n'a pas besoin de tels écoliers*, and even desire ardently to be acquainted with Sir Kenelm Digby's reply—may seem to have handed in his credentials as a critic once and for all. But one soon finds that Patin's interest in Browne was, first of all, *esprit de corps* (which was perhaps stronger in the Faculty of that time than in any profession of any other), and secondly, a certain coincidence of true but unconventional piety, different as were its forms in the two. Elsewhere Patin is a collector, an eager student of new books, a scholar even, with a conviction that Scaliger and Casaubon were "the two first men of their time," and that Salmasius was a "grand héros des belles lettres"; but not a critic, and with a distinctly limited idea of *belles lettres* themselves. He speaks contemptuously of Descartes, he barely mentions Corneille. He was, in fact, generally too angry with antimony, opium, quinine, the English, and Mazarin, or else too

[1] Ed. Réveillé, Paris, 3 vols. (Paris and London, 1846).

[2] *Ed. cit.*, i. 340, 354; ii. 35, 321.

much rapt in ecstasy at the divine powers of bleeding and purging,[1] to have time to think of poetry, or even of prose.

Nor can we afford much space to the main body of the Academicians, of the frequenters of "the" Hotel (*par excellence*), of the abbés, and *marquis*, and even *marquises* who crowd the middle of the seventeenth century history of France, not disagreeably for posterity. They must be sought in Tallemant (himself, as citations will have shown, interested in the matter, and not inept at it) as a main and single preserver, in a hundred other places, original and second-hand, from the contemporary records to the essays of Sainte-Beuve and his followers. We could fill this volume with them without the slightest difficulty; but, as in all true history, they must "speak by their foremen," and even these foremen cannot have much place. The modest and amiable Pellisson, the historian of the Academy, whose personal ugliness Boileau had the insolent vulgarity to satirise,[2] but who had a "soul of gold," was by no means a bad though a too amiable critic, and had the sense and courage not to deny Ronsard when the fashion turned against him, just as he clove to Fouquet when it was positively, and even extremely, dangerous to do so. Ménage, to whom his own unguardedness and the satire of Molière[3] have given something of a ridiculous position in literary history, had the wit to see the merit of Molière himself quite early, possessed very wide reading, and could make judicious reflections on it, had studied the Italian critics,[4] and could now and then (as in the brief obituary notice of Scarron[5]) hit off his stroke extremely well. As for Marie de Sévigné, adorable to all, and especially adored by these two, she is generally right, and always illustrates the

Tallemant, Pellisson, Ménage, Madame de Sévigné.

[1] "Certainement il faut en louer Dieu," says his editor, himself a doctor, with a kind of shudder, in reference to Patin's pious gratitude for the recovery of a colleague whom he had bled *thirty-two* times. His exploits in the direction of *ensuita purgare* are too appalling to particularise.

[2] In the 8th satire. He had the extremely small grace, however, to drop the *name* in later editions, and it does not now appear.

[3] *If* the "Vadius" of the *Femmes Savantes* is Ménage. He himself denied it rather cleverly; but there is not much doubt.

[4] See what he says on Castelvetro in the *Ménagiana* (ed. La Monnoye, Amsterdam, 1713), *ii. 86.*

[5] Ibid., ii. 174.

saying of La Bruyère, which is quoted below, whether she is right or not. But her critical position is so close to that of Saint-Evremond that what we have said of him is almost equally applicable to her, though she invests the critical attitude with her own peculiar charm.

The Ana *other than Ménage's, especially*

With one remarkable exception as almost a whole, and a certain number of scattered passages in some of them,[1] the most noteworthy thing in the other *Ana*, which has relation to Criticism, is the almost invariable connotation of the word in them. Vigneul-Marville,[2] noticing a book, says that there are in it *deux remarques de critique*, one that Myconos is not so far from Delos as Ferrari says, being only two leagues instead of seven, and the other, that somebody else is wrong in saying that it belongs to the Venetians since it is in the power of the Turks. Of course in a sense these are "critical" observations; but one is a little reminded of Hegel and philosophical instruments. More unmistakable is the clear definition given by the author of the book above excepted. Huet (p. 232 *ed. cit.*) says explicitly that *Critique* is "that part of grammar which busies itself with re-establishing the text of ancient authors in its first integrity, and purging out changes due to ignorance," &c. *This*, he goes on to say, is the art which Aristotle is said to have invented; and yet, further, he frankly declares that he himself has always looked on it as "a mean business."[3] Yet, not merely in the well-known *De l'Origine des Romans*, which is not unfrequently found in connection with the *Huetiana*, but in these themselves, he shows that he had no mean conception

[1] See, for instance, in the otherwise trivial *Chevræana*, a rather amusing string (p. 157) of criticisms passed on the great authors of antiquity; in the *Furetériana* (p. 13), an acute and most just remark on the folly of versifying scientific treatises and other things not in the least suitable for the process; and not a few in Vigneul-Marville—the absence of notes and justificatory citations in ancient historians (ii. 116); the praise of Amyot (ib. 132); the question of fully or partially formed verse in prose (ib. 188 sq.); remarks on Sforza Pallavicini's *Trattato dello stilo* (ib. 260); on "rhyme and reason" (ib. 330). (The references in this note and in the above paragraphs of the text, except where otherwise indicated, are to the collection of *Ana* in ten vols. Amsterdam and Paris, An vii.)

[2] *Ed. cit.*, ii. 87.

[3] P. 234, "*Ce travail m'a toujours paru bas, et peu digne de l'estime qu'il s'est attirée, et de l'application d'un esprit noble et élevé.*"

of the higher and nobler branches of the Art. His remarks on the Quarrel[1] are among the most sensible that we have, as was to be expected from a man who was at once an excellent scholar in ancient, and a warm admirer of modern, literature. If he is less wise on rhyme,[2] let us remember that this is *parcius objiciendum* to a contemporary, although a younger contemporary, of Milton; and if he is responsible for the astonishing statement[3] that Greek poetry "a toujours décliné depuis Homère," let us simply decline the attempt to construct any critical theodolite which will show us this line of constant declension through Sappho and Pindar, Æschylus and Aristophanes, Theocritus and the best of the Anthologists. On the other hand, the assertion advanced in the *Origine des Romans*, and defended in the *Ana*, to the effect that a good judge of poetry is even rarer than a good poet, is too double-edged, in its apparent flattery of our own office, for us to make any difficulty in applauding it, while the defence itself is singularly good. The everlasting comparison of Virgil to Theocritus and Homer has seldom been better handled than by Huet. Indeed the whole book is worth reading for the critical passages it contains. The *Traité des Romans* is a little discursively and promiscuously erudite, and Huet is thinking too much of the bastard romance of his own time, too little of the true-bred romances of old: but he knows something even of these, and he is well acquainted with the attempts of Cinthio and Pigna in the previous century to make good at least the Italian form of the kind.

the Huetiana.

In the *Valesiana*—amid much that is merely antiquarian or linguistic, and a fair though not excessive portion of the mere gossip and gabble which first made these things read and afterwards brought them into disrepute—there will be found a curious passage on the Latin hymns and their prosody, showing how dead the ear falls at certain times to the music of others, and the more curious selection of Palingenius and his *Zodiacus Vitæ* as a poem and a poet worth the pains of reading. Nor will the reputation for robustness of seventeenth-century erudition suffer from the patronising commendation of

Valesiana,

[1] P. 20 and *passim*. [2] P. 33. [3] P. 31.

Baillet's *Jugements des Savants* as a book which would be useful light reading for the giddy youth of the day who declined serious study. Yet Scaliger himself (J. J., not J. C.), according to the collection [1] standing in his name (a quaint mosaic or macaronic of French and Latin), thought that nobody save Casaubon (and "another that shall be nameless," no doubt) was really learned as men had been a hundred years earlier. He is himself nearly as untrustworthy on really critical points as his father, and had, I think, less true critical spirit. But he makes some amends for Julius Cæsar's truculent assault on the *Ciceronianus* by confessing that Longolius (the main object of the Erasmian satire) could not really be said to write in Ciceronian style when he simply fitted Ciceronian phrases together.

Scaligerana,

Another member of the group to be noted very especially is the so-called *Parrhasiana*,[2] in the title of which "Théodore Parrhase" stands for a *nom de guerre* of the industrious pressman Jean Le Clerc. It has very little in common with its class, being in part a reasoned treatise on general points of criticism, in part a defence of the author's own works against the injurious remarks of Meibomius and others. The latter we can neglect; the former contains a really interesting exposition of general critical views by one of the most experienced of the new class of professional critics and reviewers at the junction of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The distinction of the *Parrhasiana* is that it has so little distinction—that it is so thoroughly normal. Le Clerc is a thorough believer in the Ancients; but he wears his rue with this difference, that he does *not* believe in moderns who write Greek and Latin Verses, and that he is quite handsome and encouraging to those who do write in their mother tongue. They may be quite, or almost, as useful, he thinks—but as for

and Parrhasiana.

[1] Not in the general edition above cited. My copy is that of Cologne, 1695, with no printer's name, but with a nice red and black title-page, an agreeable frontispiece (representing Joseph Justus, in a chair and a long beard, addressing attentive standing periwig-pated persons), and (as a MS. note of a former possessor informs me) a great deal of matter not in any other ed.

[2] Also not in the collection. My copy is the Amsterdam edition, 2 vols., 1699.

reading for mere amusement, that is not a serious occupation. And Le Clerc is uncompromising in the prosaism of his views on poetry. In fact, I am not sure that there is anywhere else so *naïf* a confession of belief in the Lower Reason only. He finds improbabilities and absurdities, not merely in Homer, but in Virgil himself; he holds *æternum servans sub pectore vulnus,* which some not very fervid Maronites would admit as a great and poetic phrase, to be a mere surplusage; and he actually condoles with poets on the unlucky necessity under which they lie of inversions, metaphors, and so forth, *metri gratia.* I do not know whether Mr Arnold knew the *Parrhasiana,* and indeed should doubt it; but he certainly might have found chapter and verse for his strictures on the age of "prose and sense" almost anywhere in it.

Patru, Desmarets, and others.

Yet other groups or individuals in this abounding period might receive notice if this history were to be in twelve volumes instead of in three. There is Patru, not merely in his time the glory of the French bar, but extolled, by Boileau and by his enemies alike, as a sort of Quintilian and Quintilius in one[1]—as a standard at once of style and of judgment. Yet his long life and his constant occupation with literature, in talk and in reading, seem to have left us hardly anything in the shape of written criticism. There is Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, a less belauded but more interesting and perhaps more genuine man of letters. Not merely did Desmarets compose the epics ridiculed by Boileau, not merely was he the author of the excellent *Visionnaires* (the best comedy in French before Molière except Corneille's *Le Menteur*), not merely was he a "visionary" himself in his latter days, and a versifier, if not a poet, always, but he was a not inconsiderable critic. Those who choose to read his *Défense du Poème Héroique*[2] will find in it by no means the imbecility that they may expect, either in the dialogues defending the Christian poem, or in the somewhat meticulous, but sharp and not ill-deserved, "cutting-up" of Boileau which follows. But these, and much more the

[1] The suggestion of this, though not the exact phrase, will be found in Sainte-Beuve's essay (*Causeries du Lundi*, v. 275).

[2] Paris, 1675.

Conrarts and the Costars, the Maucroix, and the rest[1] must here be as *silencieux* as the first in his stock epithet. And one may confess even to doubts whether, with the amplest room and verge, they ought to have much space in a general History of Criticism as distinguished from one of special countries and periods. Hardly any of them is more than one of a *numerus;* hardly any has himself actual distinction, as persons of much inferior talents may have at other times. The Historian of Climate must have much to say about the delightful variety of that phenomenon which the British Isles display, about its causes, its phases, and the like, in general; but he would be lost, and would lose his readers in more than one sense, if he were to attempt to describe every shower or even every wet season.[2]

The attempts, not merely to make out a regular Æsthetic for Descartes, but to key this on to the great critical movement of the century, will be best dealt with later; but the greatest of the Cartesians must have a word.

[1] On all these, see *Tallemant*, Bayle, and others down to Sainte-Beuve. For a typical literary and critical quarrel, beginning politely and ending in something like Billingsgate, nothing can be better than that battle of Costar and M. de Girac, first over the dead body of Voiture and the live one of Balzac, and then over both these departed, which Sainte-Beuve tells in his liveliest manner at pp. 210-231 of the 12th vol. of the *Causeries*.

[2] To those who are acquainted with the most interesting handling of Desmarets in M. Rigault's so often cited book (*Querelle des Anc. et Mod.*, pp. 80-103), my reference to him may seem too low and little. As a matter of fact, I think rather better of Desmarets than M. Rigault did. But the latter's purpose of enlarging—I do not say exaggerating—his portraits of everybody who had to do with the "quarrel" sometimes, I think, throws them a little out of proportion, if not of focus, for a general critical history. His chapter, however, is excellent, if not quite just; and it should have by itself sufficed to save those who will not read originals from a blunder into which some writers have fallen—that of crediting Desmarets with the *first* vindication of the Christian epic, and the *first* denunciation of heathen mythology as a poetic stuff. The mere name of Tasso ought to suffice as a reminder of the falsity of this; the work of Gambara (*v. supra*, p. 107 note), though I cannot speak of it at first hand, must be got out of the way by them; and Vauquelin de la Fresnaye (*v. supra*, p. 131) had in France itself made the way plain for the author of *Clovis*. But he certainly drew a good bow in this not too happy battle; and if he takes any pleasure in the progeniture, he may probably claim John Dennis (*v. infra*, p. 436) as his son. That Boileau's treatment of him was quite unfair M. Rigault himself fully admits; but to whom and to what (including those talents of his own which he by turns prostitutes and cripples) is Boileau *not* unfair?

Malebranche need not occupy us long; indeed, this great philosopher and admirable master of French has to be dealt with by us, at least in some part, because he has been dealt with by others. The invitation to do so, if we may say it without illiberality, seems to have consisted rather in the titles than in the contents of his work. The Second Book of the *Recherche de la Vérité* is, indeed, "De l'Imagination"; the Second Part of this Second Book has much to do with *les personnes d'étude;* and the Third, Fourth, and Fifth chapters of the Third Part deal with "the imagination of certain authors," especially Tertullian, Seneca, and Montaigne. But we have seen, and shall see, how treacherous the word Imagination is, and how people will misunderstand it, however frankly they are dealt with. Malebranche, as he always is, is quite frank and quite clear; he tells us definitely that imagination for him is "a little more and a little less than sense," that it only consists in the power possessed by the soul of forming images of objects for itself. His quarrel with the "persons of study" is that they *will* read, write, and argue about the ancients, instead of recurring to primary truths; and when he deals with his three selected authors, it is not to criticise them from the literary point of view (though he finds fault with "irregular movements" in Tertullian's figures), but to object to the paralogism of the *De Pallio*, the ill-regulated imagination and feeble reasoning of Seneca, the treacherous "cavalier" manner, the "criminal attraction born of concupiscence," the disguised pedantry, the vanity, in Montaigne. Phrases here and there, in his own perfect style[1] (I doubt whether any prose writer of the *grand siècle* can give points to Malebranche), show what a critic was lost in him; but the critic—as indeed we should expect, and as is quite proper—*is* lost in the philosopher, the theologian, and the moralist.[2]

Malebranche.

And so to Boileau.

[1] As this of the very authors he censures, "Leurs paroles, toutes mortes qu'elles sont, ont plus de vigueur que la raison de certaines gens." II. 300, Ed. J. Simon, Paris, 1871.

[2] The literary *Pensées* of Pascal are still fewer, and in dealing with Montaigne he is even further from the literary point of view than Malebranche. His chief utterance is a piece of characteristic scorn at poetical *clichés* like *bel astre, fatal laurier*, &c.

It is desirable that we should examine Boileau's critical work[1] with more than ordinary care. The history of his reputation has, until recently, been on the whole not very different from that of many other eminent men of letters—that is to say, it has oscillated between extravagant reverence (during the entire eighteenth century, with rare exceptions, both in France and elsewhere) and a violent reaction (when the Romantic movement set in). Pope and Voltaire may stand as spokesmen of the former period; Keats and the men of 1830 of the latter. But of late years, and in England as well as in France, the cant of criticism (which is as protean, and as immortal, as most such Duessas) has devised another thing. Even in the extreme Romantic time, true critics, especially Sainte-Beuve, had recognised how germane, in wrong as in right, the taste and temper of Boileau were to the taste and temper of literary France generally, and to some extent of the Latin peoples old and new. But latterly, under the powerful influence of M. Ferdinand Brunetière—whom, though I often disagree with him, I always name for the sake of most unaffected honour, and as a critic of whom any country and time might have been proud—this tendency has gone much further, and we are even asked to accept Monsieur Nicolas as an adequate representative of the French literary genius. Let us remember what "adequate" means; it means to a great, at least, if not to the very fullest, extent commensurate, coextensive, and complete. And in England also there has been not wanting an affectation of deference to this estimate—of arguing that we ought to let the French know best in such points—that it is wicked, rude, uncritical, to intrude English judgment into such matters.

The history of Boileau's reputation.

So be it, for the moment, and for the sake of argument. Let us then, as we do always, as from this point of view it is more

[1] Of the immense number (estimated years ago at nearly five hundred) of editions of the Works in whole or part, that of Berriat de Saint-Prix in 4 vols., 1830-34, is, I believe, as nearly the standard as any. There is, however, a magnificent modern edition of the *Œuvres Poétiques*, edited by M. Brunetière (Paris, 1889), which I am glad to possess. The ordinary "Collection" editions, such as that of Garnier, though complete enough on the verse side, are apt to omit what they think the less interesting pieces of prose.

specially necessary that we should do, inquire what the *actual* criticism of this "adequate" representative of the French genius is. And in doing this let us begin with the *Art Poétique*, that elaborately arranged code of neo-classic correctness, the composition of which occupied half the central decade[1] of its author's life when he was in the full vigour of ripe age, which summed up all the doctrine of his earlier satires, and is practically repeated by most of his later.

The Art Poétique.

In making the examination we shall (not without considerable generosity) abstain from bearing too hardly upon the flagrant ignorance of literary history, even in his own country, which Boileau here displays. His modern defenders (not, it must be confessed, till those who do not defend him had made uncompromising championship on this point impossible) practically confess and avoid it, pass it with a half-petulant "Agreed!" They cannot well do otherwise: for in the famous lines (I. 113-130) from

Its false literary history.

"Durant les premiers ans du Parnasse Français,"

to

"Rendit plus retenus Desportes et Bertaut,"

an amount of crass ignorance, or of impudent falsification, is amassed which is really curious, and almost creditable, at least to the audacity of the author's party-spirit, or the serenity of his indifference. Even in the oldest French poetry that we possess, much more in the *Roman de la Rose* (which he adduces in a note, having obviously never read it), the "words" were *not* "arranged without measure"; there *were* "strict numbers"; and there was even a pretty strict cæsura. Villon did not do anything to "the art of the old romancers," but wrote in precisely the same measures as men had written in for a hundred and fifty years before him. Marot simply adopted ballades, wrote no triolets, did nothing new to rondeaux, while we are only unable to convict Boileau of error as to *mascarades*, because

[1] He was thirty-three when he began it, and thirty-eight when it was finished. A very excellent separate edition of it is that of the Cambridge University Press, by Mr D. Nichol Smith (1898).

nobody has yet discovered what, exactly, a *mascarade* is. The description of Ronsard's action is rubbish: while it is quite certain that both Desportes and Bertaut went to their graves without the slightest doubt that he was Prince of French poets, and were not in the least "restrained" in following him. And the history of the French Drama in Canto Three only deserves less reprehension because it was really not very easy at the time for a man to know much about it.

But let this suffice. And let us also exercise our perhaps undeserved generosity on another point, that wholesale and unblushing imitation of Horace which made the Abbé Cotin, one of Boileau's victims, retort with as much truth as wit, in the very form of one of Despréaux' own insolences—

"J'appelle Horace Horace—et Boileau traducteur."[1]

After all, though a paradox, it is not an impossibility, that a man should be a great critic and yet most untrustworthy on literary history, and apt to make his own work, in great part, a mere mosaic of the work of others.

Let us then take the *Art Poétique* simply as criticism—not as a series of statements of fact, not as an original or a borrowed argument—and see how it looks this way.

Abstract of it.

The first Canto begins (in the teasing inverted style[2] which was one of Boileau's worst legacies to French poetry, and which itself was a "corrupt following" of Latin) with a declaration of the necessity of genius, which has been counted to him for much righteousness. Everybody has not the genius for everything, and it does not follow that because you have a genius for convivial songs you have one for Epic. But good sense and reason are as necessary as genius. Indeed we are soon told that writing depends on these *alone* for its value: so that genius is like those tickets of admission which are quite useless till they are countersigned by somebody other than

[1] Boileau did not merely "convey" from the ancients. He had the specially ugly, though not so specially uncommon, trick of insulting a man and stealing from him at the same time. (Cf. Théophile Gautier's article, in *Les Grotesques*, on his namesake.)

[2] "*C'est en vain qu'au Parnasse un téméraire auteur,*
Pense de l'art des vers attendre la hauteur."

the issuer. Never try high flights or conceits. Do not describe your subjects or objects too minutely. Cultivate variety, but never be "low," burlesque, or bombastic. Whatever you do, mind cæsura and avoid hiatus. Then follows the pseudo-history referred to above, capped by its phrase of Malherbe, in whose steps you are to walk. Clearness of expression is of the greatest value; but as a fact it depends on clearness of thought. Smart things will not ransom faults. If you fear criticism, anticipate it by yourself and your friends; but beware of flatteries, and, above all, do not take the part of your own faults simply because your friends have noticed them. The First Canto ends with the really excellent line, in Boileau's true vein (for, whatsoe'er the failings on his part as a critic, he was a satirist born and bred)—

"Un sot trouve toujours un plus sot qui l'admire."

The Second Canto begins, *apropos* of nothing (indeed Boileau was frankly troubled about his "transitions"), with a discussion, partly metaphorical, of the Idyll, Eclogue, and Pastoral, followed by a similar account of other kinds of shorter pieces—Elegy, Ode, Sonnet, Epigram, and others, down to Vaudeville—the Fable being absent, to the discomfort and laborious excuse-making of the disciples. The Idyll must be neither too pompous nor too trivial: follow Theocritus and Virgil and all will be right. Elegy is proper for Death and Love; but you must not, in regard to the latter, be frigid and hackneyed. Imitate Tibullus and Ovid, and again all will be right. The ode is worthy of Achilles or Louis; but do not be too historical—which indeed would be difficult in regard to Achilles, and might be inconvenient in regard to Louis. Sonnets are very difficult, but a sonnet without fault is by itself worth an Epic.[1] The epigram may have *pointes*, which are elsewhere to be utterly rejected. The other

[1] It may be sometimes forgotten in the quotation of this famous line, that *long poem* was a technical term in French criticism, from the days of the Pléiade downwards, and means definitely an Epic, or Heroic Poem, not a long piece of verse. It is characteristic of Boileau to hit backwards at the *modern* epic, of which he was no admirer, in this rather treacherous praise of the sonnet, towards which he was equally lukewarm.

kinds are lightly treated till the Satire, descending to the *vaudeville*, has a longer discussion. Satire, the apologist *pro domo* declares, is the voice of Truth. Lucilius, Horace, Juvenal, are characterised. Regnier is *our* best man; but his style is antiquated, and his subjects and language are really shocking.[1] Then "the Frenchman, *né malin*," made the Vaudeville. It is only fair to Boileau to say that, could he have foreseen the tedious abuse of this *mot*, he would certainly either have forborne it, or have given us a capital line or couplet to tie to the tail of the culprits. Canto Three passes, with no less abruptness, to the drama, which occupies the first half, the latter part being given to the Epic. Boileau is at first vague. In fact, he does not seem at all thoroughly to have appreciated the Aristotelian doctrine, which in the main he runs up as his flag. Dramatic art in teaching must please and touch, which it may do by exciting pity and terror. Do not make a long and obscure introduction; keep the Unities as you value your dramatic salvation; never be incredible; and let everything contribute to the development of your story.

The Historic Muse reappears, but in such case, as hinted above, that we shall magnanimously abstain from further vengeance on her. If only Boileau had omitted the unhappy note which says that *leurs pièces* (those of his imaginary *pélerins*) *sont imprimées*, thereby suggesting that he had read them! You must have Love: but do not be *doucereux;* keep the stock characters; do not modernise the ancients; and if you invent a personage let him be constant to himself. The theatre really is very difficult. But Epic is still more so. It depends entirely upon action, upon fable; and in order to make it noble you put in the *deorum ministerium*.[2] Æneas' voyage would have been quite an ordinary thing without Juno, and Neptune, and Æolus:—

"C'est là ce qui surprend, frappe, saisit, attache."[3]

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[1] As it takes ten lines (171-180) in the French to explain our single epithet, they need not make fun of it.

[2] See on the Petronian passage, vol. i. p. 245, and on its mischievous influence the present chapter, *passim*.

[3] I like to vary Boileau's stale criticism with his admirably fresh and vigorous verse.

But the modern deity will not do at all; and devils and angels are worse. Do let us keep our Tritons, our Parcæ, our Pan, and our Charon! If not, in a short time we shall not be able to tie a bandage on the eyes of Themis, or put a balance in her hand![1] Further, be very careful of your names. There was a person once who actually called his hero Childebrand! Minor receipts for handling follow; and then we find ourselves back on the stage with Comedy, as to which Boileau extols Nature, and tells us that Molière would have been the best of comic dramatists—if he had been other than he was.

The Fourth Canto returns to the generalities of the first, and, taking advantage of this wider scope, begins an attack, not unamusing but in very bad taste, on Claude Perrault, architect, doctor, and, like his more celebrated brother Charles, and a third not so well known as either, a champion on the modern side (*v. infra*). It ends, in accordance with the habits of the age, in an elaborate and rather well-declaimed panegyric of the king, wherein the adroit historiographer supplies an epilogue to the perhaps not quite so adroit critic.

For some lines in the middle Boileau, though constantly returning to the crutch of Horace, does occupy himself with literature. His precepts may be thus summarised. Whatever you are, be not a bad writer, and if you *must* be, be rather bombastic than cold; but, on the whole, degrees of mediocrity do not much matter. Here the satirist once more comes to the rescue and dictates the (in application insolent,[2] but) intrinsically good couplet—

> "Un fou du moins fait rire et peut nous égayer,
> Mais un froid écrivain ne sait rien qu'ennuyer."

Do not pay attention to flatterers (we had heard this before), do not excuse your verses, but keep an open ear for every comment: though you must be careful to separate foolish from wise criticisms. Join the solid and useful to the pleasant. Let your

[1] "She can do without them," as L. Arruntius most excellently remarked on a parallel occasion. *Vide* i. 238.

[2] As usual Boileau gives the actual names of half a score inhabitants of the French Grub Street, of whom Cyrano de Bergerac (he was long dead, and Boileau was safe) has the consolation prize of being merely *fou*.

morality be of the very first water. You may introduce love; but respect principle and the young person. Do not be jealous of your rivals; do not put literature above its proper place; for heaven's sake do not endeavour to make profit out of your writings [except by pensions].[1] Be not avaricious, but attend to Reason. If you do, Louis will give you pensions; and you will not have to tremble, like Colletet,[2] for your dinner, which depends on the success of a sonnet. Of this last ignoble gibe (too much imitated, alas! by our own Pope) we need take no further notice; and we shall say nothing more on any of the other points in Boileau which invite unfavourable comment, but are not strictly critical. Let us judge him as a critic only, and first on this piece.

Is it good criticism?

This of course is far too large a question to answer off-hand. We must hunt the answer to it by the way of minor questions, such as, Is it original? (the least important but of some importance). If it is not, What does it add to, and how ingeniously and usefully does it apply, the original from which it borrows? What methods does it use? To what extent and in what fashion would a poet adopting it as a manual be qualified for his art? And lastly (though perhaps some minor questions may crop up in our passage), What incidental excellences does it contain? What is the merit of the critical estimates which the author makes, in passing or with deliberation, of the authors, great and small, of the past and the present?

Critical examination of it.

Let us take these questions in order, and see what answers the *Art Poétique*, examined without prejudice, but without fear[3] or favour, can give to them.

[1] They were probably the *tribut légitime* which a *noble esprit* might derive from his work.

[2] This refers to the *son*, François (1628-1680), of a more poetic pair—Guillaume (1598-1659) and Claudine Colletet. The former of these was also a critic in his way, and left, besides an *Art Poétique* (1658) of no great value, a *Histoire des Poètes Français* which, strangely enough, was never printed, and the MS. of which was burnt by the Vandals of the Commune in 1871.

[3] A humourist might maintain the two opposite theses, "That Boileau has genuine authority," and "That the French are always craving for a tyrant," on the strength of a curious *catena* of evidence from Voltaire's "Ça porte

As to the first question there is, to a certain extent, no difference of opinion. The injured Cotin undoubtedly had truth on his side, in the parody quoted above, as to a large part of the *Art Poétique*. But what has not been quite sufficiently recognised is that this is the best part. Take away the almost (sometimes quite) literal translations from Horace, and you will take away Boileau's backbone; take away the Horatian suggestions, and you will go far to deprive his criticism of its skeleton altogether, and leave it a mere jumble of promiscuous observations. It would be interesting and by no means otiose—if one only had the money and the time—to print the *Art Poétique* with the direct Horatian borrowment in rubric, the suggested passages in black italic, and the mere personalities, illustrations, flatteries, lampoons, and the like, in, say, blue. But I fear the remains in ordinary print would be wofully small, and still more wofully unimportant. This, however, would not matter so very much if Boileau had been strikingly original in what he adds, or had applied the Horatian doctrine with striking appropriateness to the altered condition of literature. One would think it impossible, if distinguished instances to the contrary were not known, for any one to maintain that he has done either. By far the greater part of the achievements of modern, and practically the whole of the achievements of mediæval, literature up to his time, are simply ignored, or, where referred to, ridiculously misdescribed. Nay more, Horatian parallels are got in by inventing a history of what never existed.

Want of originality.

Nor could anything else possibly happen, considering the methods which Boileau chose to adopt. These methods are, First, the construction of a Horatian-Aristotelian bed to which everything has to be adjusted in point of principle; and of this it is not necessary to say more. Secondly, the suggestion as models, at every turn, of Latin and (much less often) Greek poets, utterly regardless of the change of circumstances. Thirdly, the method of criticism by Kinds

Faults of method.

malheur" to Marmontel, who had presumed to speak lightly of Despréaux, down to M. Bourgoin's "On a difficilement raison contre Boileau." But to those who "bear an English heart" these terrors are idle.

—of laying down the rules for, and discussing the ends of, the abstract Pastoral, the abstract Elegy, the abstract Sonnet, Ode, and so forth, with only a few perfunctory eulogies of actual examples. In regard to the first and second it is enough to quote the critic's own words against him, and ask him how Ovid or Tibullus can be a sufficient, can be even a safe, guide to a French love-poet, and how the marvels of ancient mythology can become the "machinery" of a modern epic? In regard to the third, the old battering-ram must be once more applied. Pastoral, Elegy, Ode, and the rest (except "Sonnet," which is a *form*) are not unequivocal names applied to abstractly existing things, but mere tickets. Give me a poem, and I will tell you whether I think it a good or a bad poem, and why. You may, after that, if you have the time and care to take the trouble, classify it as epic or elegy, epigram or ode. But the box in which you choose to deposit it does not really matter in the least; and if it should so happen that there is no box ready, you must either make, or do without, one. Is the poem good or bad as poetry?—that is the *articulus stantis vel cadentis criticismi.*

Obsession of good sense.

But the most surprising thing in Boileau's method, and the most fatal, is the thing on which he prides himself most, and which has been most commended in him—the perpetual appeal to Good Sense and Reason.[1] It is surprising, because Longinus, whom he strangely assumed to be a prophet after his own heart, had warned him amply, and one might think irresistibly, some fifteen hundred years before. "Heights of eloquence or of poetry, but especially of poetry," that mighty critic had said, "do not lead to persuasion *but to ecstasy.*" Now it is with Persuasion only—in the Greek sense, which includes intellectual conviction and practical influence—that Good Sense and Reason, in Boileau's sense, can deal. It is true that very glaring offences against them may sometimes (by no means always) interfere with Ecstasy; but the most

[1] It is interesting and significant that Boileau's defenders generally drop "Good Sense," and use, whenever they can, the more ambiguous and high-sounding "Reason." It is sufficient to say that their author repeats "Good Sense" again and again, and obviously uses Reason as a mere synonym for it.

heroic doses of either or both will never cause it. Generally speaking—the saying has of course the danger of the double edge, but it is true for all that—when Good Sense comes in at the door Ecstasy flies out of the window, and when Ecstasy flies in at the window, Good Sense and (the lower) Reason retire prudishly by the door. At any rate, if they remain, it will be necessary for them to keep themselves very much in the background, and wait till they are called for. They may very well act as detectives and catchpolls when False Ecstasy usurps the place of true; but like other police-officers they have rather an awkward habit of mistaking their men. Every respect is of course to be paid to them; their assistance is sometimes very welcome and valuable even to the poet, while the prose-writer can seldom dispense with their constant surveillance. But even the latter may sometimes be hindered of his finest effects by looking first to them; while the Poet who does so will never rise beyond the lower-middle slopes of Parnassus, if he even reaches these.

Now, unless these considerations can be got out of the way, the answer to yet a further question, What help does Boileau give the Poet? will be a most meagre and disappointing one. Some of the positive helps which he offers—the rule of Good Sense, and the empty forms of Kinds—are likely to be, in the first case positively mischievous, in the second rather hindering than helpful. His historical doctrine is usually wrong, and, where not wrong, inadequate. His constant prescription of "the ancients"—not merely as *general* guides in literature—nobody need ask for better—but as immediate and particular models for all kinds of literary exercise, will in its most rigorous observation make a mere translating anachronist, and even if more freely construed, will again hinder much more than it helps.

Arbitrary proscriptions.

But the majority of Boileau's counsels are not positive at all, they are simply negative: and negative counsels in art, when the pupil is once out of schoolboyhood, never did much good yet, and have often done a great deal of harm. Why should his *risus ineptus* at the name "Childebrand" proscribe that name, which is euphonious enough to

unprejudiced ears? What "sensible and reasonable" (we may thank him for these words) criterion of sound makes "Philis" preferable to "Toinon" or, prettier still, Toinette? It is true, doubtless, that, for a continuance, the long Alexandrine divides best at the middle; but what reason, what sense is there in the absolute proscription of a penthemimeral or hephthemimeral cæsura? In what does the welcoming of Pan and Charon, and the banishing of Ashtaroth and Beelzebub, differ from the immortal decision that "blue uniforms are only good for the artillery and the Blue Horse"? And so throughout.

Boileau's other works.

But, it will be said, the *Art Poétique* is not Boileau's sole critical deliverance. It is most true; in fact, though his work is, for a man who went safely beyond the three score years and ten and half-way to the four score,[1] a rather scanty work, it is pervaded with literature and with criticism. By a curious contrast to those Roman satirists, of whom we spoke erstwhile, his criticism of life is always turning to literature. The admirable heroi-comic satire of the *Lutrin* itself gravitates somehow or other to the battle in the book-shop, which enables the poet to gibbet his victims once more; not to mention that the whole fun of this very *Lutrin* is (though Boileau did not in the least know it) a sort of *reductio ad absurdum* of his own critical doctrines in the *Art*. Most of the other pieces are either directly critical of a kind, or the expression of brief and rather reluctantly obeyed avocations from criticism. Let us examine them,—though with somewhat less minuteness.

The Satires.

The dominance of the literary subject in the *Satires* is well known, though it is equally notorious that illiberal personality too often takes the place of liberal criticism. Colletet's poverty and parasitism; Saint-Amant's

[1] If I have seemed, or may seem, too bitter in any remarks on Boileau, let me here observe that few things in literary history are more pathetic than these last years of his, when, *ultimus suorum*, amid the ruins of the political glories which he had celebrated, and in a transition period between the great literature of the seventeenth century and that of the eighteenth, with no one but his foolish Boswell-Eckermann, Brossette, to comfort him, and no one at all to whom to look as his successor, he held—unconquered and unconquerable—to his principles, and died, as one of the poets to whom he was so unjust had said,

"Sans bouger, debout et dans son rang."

death from fever, brought on by his ill-success (he would have died of hunger anyhow, says the satirist good-naturedly)—these are the subjects that interest him in the First. In the Second to Molière, with oblique censure of, or at least surprise at the easy versification of the dramatist, he bewails (being evidently proud of it) his own studious "difficulty"[1] in rhyming, jests at the stock phrases and *chevilles* of others from Ménage to Scudéry. Even in the Third—the old bad-dinner satire of Horace and Regnier—he brings in a literary quarrel about Théophile and Ronsard and Quinault. The Fifth, to Dangeau, is one of the few which have hardly any literary touches. But he will drag the luckless Abbé de Pure into the Sixth on the noises and nuisances of Paris, while the Seventh is wholly literary, and is one of the earliest (1663) of his explosions at bad poets, and the Eighth, on the follies of humanity, naturally takes shots at the old target.

All these, however, much more the awkward Tenth, on Women, and the very inferior Eleventh, must give place to the Ninth, an imitation of Horace, II. vii., written in the author's fortieth or forty-first year, nominally to defend himself for his former attacks on his compeers, but really, of course, to renew them. Once more his favourite equivalents (only mentioned *infamiæ causa*) for Gyas and Cloanthus—Colletet, Pelletier, Quinault, and the rest—appear. Once more Racan receives partial, and Théophile almost total, insult. Here is the famous contrast of *le clinquant du Tasse* and *l'or de Virgile;* and here the still more famous lines on the *Cid*, embedded in—and plainly owing their complimentary tone to the fact that they are embedded in—an onslaught on Chapelain. Again and again the luckless Cotin is "horsed" and justified: while the almost equally luckless Pelletier[2] serves as a foil to "d'Ablancourt et Patru." The singular posthumous piece *Sur l'Équivoque*, appended usually as

[1] That he had taught Racine *rimer difficilement* is the well-known boast in that uncomplimentary comparison of his pupil with Corneille, by which he appears to have administered a sort of private unction to his soul to atone for his public injustice.

[2] Not of course Boileau's worthy predecessor in Art-Poetic writing (*v. supra*, pp. 117, 118), but an advocate of the mid-seventeenth century, who was unfortunate enough to commit sonnets, and to be disliked by the satirist.

the Twelfth satire, is a sort of attempt to generalise and amplify the author's horror of conceit and obscurity.

The Epigrams *and* Epistles.

To dwell on the minor pieces of verse, which are often literary, would be here impossible; it is enough to say that they include the two epigrams on Corneille's *Agésilas* and *Attila*, and numerous assaults on Perrault. The *Epistles* are not nearly so full of our matter as the *Satires;* but the Seventh (to Racine on the success of the opposition *Phèdre* by the hated Pradon) and the Tenth (on his own verses) belong to us. The first of these has been very highly, and in part quite deservedly, praised. The reference to the death and the almost dishonoured grave of Molière, though slightly theatrical, is both vigorous and really touching; the eulogy of Racine himself is, in the circumstances, but allowably excessive; and the half-flattering, half-boasting mention of his own enjoyment of the favour of the "great," from Louis to La Rochefoucauld, would be tolerable if it were not mainly a vehicle for fresh abuse of Linière and Tallemant, of Perrin and Pradon himself.

Prose—The Héros de Roman; *the* Réflexions sur Longin.

The prose is equally saturated with criticism. The dialogue on *Les Héros de Roman*, which Fontenelle could have done admirably, Boileau has not done very well; but his satire on the extraordinary bastard kind of romance with which France at this time deluged Europe is not ill-founded, though rather ill-informed.[1] The Letters are full enough of criticism. But the two chief prose documents from which (at least from their titles) something really important may be expected, are the *Dissertation* on the story of Giocondo, as told by its inventor and by La Fontaine, and the *Réflexions sur Longin.* These last, however, the reader need hardly trouble himself with: they may even be classed among the impieties of criticism. Boileau, little as he could have appreciated, did at least know the Great Unknown. He translated him; he calls him very truly *le plus grand*, and more questionably *le plus sévère*, of ancient critics.

[1] Even his admirers admit his strange ignoring of the fact that Madeleine de Scudéry *intended* her personages to be modern—that they were mere disguises of Condé and others, not attempts to re-create antiquity. This of course does not exempt them from blame; but it requires a different sort of blame.

But these *Réflexions* on Longinus are in fact reflections on Charles Perrault, a very clever person, but not in the least like Longinus: and the texts from the Περὶ Ὕψους, which are put at the head of each chapter, often have nothing to do with the subject at all, and in almost every case might almost as well have been selected from the first book he picked up. In the particular dispute I am with him, and not with Perrault; but the first exclamation of any real lover of the real classics who reads the piece must be *Non tali auxilio!* Boileau, as always, is arrogant and rude; as sometimes elsewhere his scholarship is not beyond suspicion, though it had an easy triumph over the almost total absence of the same quality in his adversary; but, as he is very seldom, he is confused, desultory, heavy. To those who think that criticism is the art of scolding, the *Réflexions sur Longin* may seem to be a creditable exercise in it: hardly to others.

The "Dissertation on Joconde."

Almost the only critical essay of the proper kind that we have from this famous critic is the other piece mentioned above —the "Dissertation on the *Joconde*." The occasion was not unpromising. A certain M. de Saint-Gilles, seriously or otherwise, had preferred the version of Ariosto's tale by one Bouillon to that of La Fontaine, and the question (which had taken the form of a bet between Saint-Gilles and La Mothe le Vayer de Bretigny) was referred to Boileau for decision. I confess that I have never taken the trouble to look up the works of M. de Bouillon: the specimens that Boileau gives are quite enough, and he exercises his ferule like the vigorous and (within limits) accurate and useful pedagogue that he is. But, unluckily, he thinks it necessary not merely to prefer La Fontaine to Bouillon, but to belittle Ariosto[1] in favour of La Fontaine. I defy anybody—Frenchman or non-Frenchman—to have, within certain limits, a greater admiration for La Fontaine than I have; and I am heretical enough to like the *Contes* even better than the *Fables*.

[1] The condescending praise of "Arioste *et ses fables comiques*," in *A. P.*, iii. 291, can hardly be regarded as a set-off, especially as just before (l. 218) he had stigmatised him, emphasising the stigma by a note, as "follement idolâtre et païen."

But why this miserable setting of two great things against each other? Why not like both? This is what critics of the Boileau type cannot do: they must have their rat-pit of false comparison, their setting-by-the-ears, their belittling in order to exalt. It must be said that Boileau is justly punished. His usual critical censures are so vague and general—he is so apt to tell us that So-and-so is a bad poet without showing us *how* he is bad—that he escapes confutation. Not so here. In the first place he shows, as perhaps we might have anticipated, that worst of critical defects, an inability to "take" his author. He is very angry with the famous grave beginning of the tavern-keeper's much less than grave story—the stately *Astolfo, re de' Longobardi*, and the rest. He thinks that "le bon messer Ludovico" had forgotten, or rather did not care for, the precept of his Horace, "Versibus exponi tragicis res comica non vult."

Undoubtedly Messer Ludovico did not care one of his favourite turnips for it! And, according to the key of humour in which he was writing—a key struck before him, but never so well as by him, in Italian, familiar in English, but unknown in French till recently—he was quite right in this negligence. Boileau proceeds to give rules for "telling an absurd thing in such a manner as to intimate to the reader that you do not yourself believe it." Very good; that is the *Lutrin* way—a capital way too; but not the only one. And Ariosto is at least entitled to try this other, in which he succeeds so admirably to all who have eyes or ears and will use them. The critic, again, is very angry with Ariosto for making Giocondo abstain from poniarding his wife because of the love he bore her. "Il n'y a point de passion plus tragique et plus violente que la jalousie qui naît d'un extrême amour." Let us not remark too unkindly that Despréaux' knowledge of *un extrême amour* was, by all accounts, including his own, the reverse of experimental. His error is more widespreading. It is part of that unlucky arrangement of "typed" kinds—not less of character and passion than of writing—which the neo-classic system insists upon. Your passions, like your poetic forms, are all pigeon-holed, and their conduct prescribed to them. You must "keep the type" once more. *Pour le bonheur du genre humain*, Ariosto knew better.

We must not, tempting as it is, dwell on the plea that Giocondo's honest agony, "a quelque chose de tragique qui ne vaut rien dans un conte à rire," while La Fontaine's easy-going wittol is quite a cheerful object; on the inestimable cry of outraged verisimilitude, "Où est-ce que Joconde trouve si vite une hostie sacrée pour faire jurer le roi?" or on the extraordinary casuistry as to the time occupied, in the two versions, by the climax of the triple arrangement of Fiammetta. In this, as in the remarkable letter of reconciliation to Perrault,[1] one is at first inclined to suspect irony; but in neither case will the hypothesis work out. Here Boileau presents what looks like a caricature of the "classical" criticism; yet it exactly coincides with his general precepts elsewhere. There he gives away almost, not quite, the whole of the Ancient case by admitting the superiority of the moderns after a fashion which, if we took it to be ironical, would reflect upon his own familiar friends and patterns—Molière, La Fontaine, and Racine.

A "Solifidian of Good Sense."

In fact, recent and repeated reading of Boileau has made me doubt whether he had *any* critical principle, except that of Good Sense. He almost says so in so many words in the *Art Poétique;* his general or particular sayings elsewhere say it over again with mere change of name and instance. If he loved the classics, it was because the classics he knew best—the Latins of the Augustan age—do probably observe this "good-sense" standard more than any other great writers of any time but his own. And if he was unjust to the great writers of the time just before his own, and savage to the small among his contemporaries, it was because the prevailing fashion, for two or three generations, had set in a direction which Good Sense alone must constantly disapprove. Now Good Sense is not a high tribunal, but a very low one,—we were better off with our old friend Furor Poeticus, though he did sometimes talk, and encourage the talking of, nonsense. The mere "Solifidian" of Good Sense knows nothing, and can know nothing, about poetry.

Nay more, one may ask without real impertinence, Is Boileau's

[1] Written in 1700 and published next year. Letter vi. of the ordinary collection.

Art Poétique in any vital and important sense an Art of Poetry at all, any more than it is an Art of Pig-breeding, or of Pottery-making, or of Pyrotechnics? In all these useful and agreeable pursuits—for the matter of that in all other arts, trades, professions, employments, and vocations—it is desirable to know what you are about, to proceed cautiously and sensibly, to choose the right materials, to combine them in the right way, not to go beyond your powers and means, to vary your appeals to the public, to take good advice, to observe the practice of proved success in the particular department, to study its kinds and species carefully, not to launch out too far nor restrain your operations too much, and to observe the laws of morality and propriety throughout. But what is there specially *poetical* in all this? Or what does Boileau add to this to make his treatise specially poetical? A few—decidedly few—technical cautions of the lower kind, not all of them unquestionable; some general or mediate rules, mostly borrowed from Horace, and not a few of them more questionable still; some literary history which, as we have seen, is utterly worthless; and a seasoning of mostly spiteful hits at poets he dislikes.

The plea for his practical services.

But, they say—and this is practically the stronghold to which they all retire—"Look at his practical services to French literature and French poetry. Look at the badness of the styles he attacked, and the completeness with which he cleared them away. What a reformer! What a Hercules purging the poetic country of monsters and malefactors! Can you possibly deny this merit?"

Historical examination of this.

Let nothing be denied—or, for the matter of that, affirmed—before everything has been considered. What are the facts? Boileau came at the end—at the very end—of a stage of French poetry which had been rather a long one, and unquestionably one of very chequered and not very highly distinguished performance. The somewhat hasty theories, and the often splendid, but nearly always unequal, practice of the *Pléiade*, had given place to a sort of rococo individualism, to the bastard and easily ignoble kinds of parody and burlesque, or to corrupt followings of Spanish and Italian practice. Many charming, and some fine, things

(including that stately passage of Chapelain's which many classical critics, who scoff at his name, have admired when all but literally translated in *The Deserted Village*) had been written; but the writers had constantly dropped from them to the trivial and the bombastic. But when Boileau began seriously to write in 1663-64,[1] this period was in its very last stage. It could not have lasted much, or any, longer if there had been no Boileau at all. Of his actual victims some were long dead; others were very old men; the younger were persons of no importance, *ephemera*, whether critical or poetical, which would have died with the day. The smoky torch of Théophile —a true poetic torch for all its smoke—had flickered out nearly forty years before. Cyrano, to whom Boileau gives contemptuous blessing in part, only that he may ban him and others more effectively, had slept in peace for eight years. Saint-Amant, who had real poetic gift, and who, if he was no scholar in the ancient tongues, knew the modern in a fashion which puts Boileau's ignorance of their literatures to shame, had met the end described so feelingly by his critic some three years earlier. Chapelain was a man of sixty-seven; Cotin one of sixty. It is by attacking not the dead and decrepit, but the young and rising, that a man shows himself a great warrior and a useful citizen in criticism. In fact, the principles of correctness which Boileau espoused had, as we have seen, been practically taken up long before, even by poor creatures like the Abbé d'Aubignac, in certain departments, and Chapelain himself had smitten in this sense before he felt the wounds.

Still less can Boileau be allowed any credit for the great achievements which undoubtedly took place during his own middle life. The glories of French literature in verse (and, as far as the three first go, in poetry), about 1664, are Corneille, Racine, La Fontaine, Molière. Corneille had been writing before Boileau was born: the only piece of his which Boileau praises generously was produced in the year of the critic's birth; and that critic is silent about most of the Master's work, and sneers ignobly at its later examples. The magnificent

[1] The First and Sixth Satires are a little, and some smaller pieces much, earlier than this, but they are indecisive and unimportant.

genius of Molière owed nothing to Boileau in its beginnings, and accepted little, if anything, from his criticism in its perfection; while not all of its results were cordially welcomed by the critic, personal friends as they were. La Fontaine, an older man than Boileau by fifteen years, was still more independent of him at the beginning, shows extremely little mark of any influence from him at any time, and, for all their friendship, experienced from him the almost unaccountable omission of his favourite kind, the Fable (unlike the *Conte*, a perfectly "unobjectionable" one), in the *Art Poétique* itself. There remains Racine, and, if the schooling and training of Racine seem to any one so great a thing that his schoolmaster and trainer becomes, *ipso facto*, one of the *Di majores* of criticism, there is not much more to be said. But there is something: and it is this. In the first place, to assume that Racine's genius could not have made its own way without Boileau's mentorship, is to pay a far worse compliment to that genius than some not very fervent Racinians can allow; and, in the second, the spirit, if not the letter, of his criticism is against that of Racine's very best work. If I cared to do so, I think I could show that *Phèdre* herself comes within the Bolæan[1] maledictions. As for *Athalie*, the very admirers of Boileau have asked how, after his unsparing censure of the religious epic, he could tolerate the religious drama?

Have we done? Not quite. After such a reformation, after such labours of Hercules as we have held up to us, we are entitled to expect a new crop, a new breed of poets rising everywhere from the purged and heartened land. Is the poetic product of the last quarter of the seventeenth century in France so admirable, so refreshing, such a contrast to the period of Chapelain and Saint-Amant? I have some small acquaintance with French literature, but I am unable to supply the names of the "Poets like Shakespeare, Beautiful souls," who, formed by the precepts of the *Art Poétique*, rush in crowds

[1] Cf. *Bolæana*. On the other hand, the Rev. J. Garbett, whom anti-Tractarian feeling made Professor of Poetry at Oxford when Isaac Williams was a candidate, has "Bollevian" (*De Re Critica Prælectiones*, Oxford, 1847, *Præl.* iv. i.) I am not bigoted on the point.

upon the sight during that period. But, it will be said, time must be given—the French poetry of the *eighteenth* century is the work of Boileau through his disciples. It is: and by these fruits may he and they be justly judged. He cannot, indeed, claim the admirable light work of Piron and the rest: some of it very nearly, or quite, incurs his anathemas, and all is composed more or less outside his precepts, and in accordance with the practice of La Fontaine rather than with his. But he can claim the *Henriade*, and, *in part*, the odes of J. B. Rousseau—he may be permitted even to assume the laurels of Delille and of Le Brun-*Pindare*. Perhaps, despite the sacred adage, the growth of the thorn does indicate the strength and genuineness of the vine, and, perhaps, it can only be a fig which is so fertile in such stately thistles.

Concluding remarks on him.

But the real weakness of Boileau's criticism does not fully appear till we come to examine him on the true ground. What are his actual critical deliverances, on concrete critical points, worth? We have seen something of the answer to this already. A certain amount of his condemning censure—though nearly always expressed without urbaneness, without humanity, with the hectoring and bullying tone of an ill-conditioned schoolmaster, or the venom of a spiteful rival—must be validated; there is no lack of bad writers at any time, and Boileau's provided a plentiful crop of them. But in most instances these writers were unimportant weeds, who would have been cast into the oven on the morrow of their flourishing, if Boileau had never written a line. On the other hand, in regard to the two greatest writers, in verse or drama, of his own day and country, Corneille and Molière, he loses no opportunity of censuring the one, and accords, till after his death, but faint and limited praise to the other. Even his misbeloved ancients he cannot praise with the mingled enthusiasm and acuteness that mark Longinus, or even Dionysius. The great merit of Virgil, in his eyes, is that Virgil manages mythological "machines" so deftly: and, if we look elsewhere at what he says of writers so different as Æschylus and Ovid, we shall find a flat generality, with no attempt even at the *mot propre*. Only on the satirists, at least on Horace

and Juvenal, is he better. For Boileau, as we have said, was a satirist to the core, to the finger-tips, and here he speaks as he feels. If we want his opinion on great modern foreign poets, we have it explicitly on Tasso and Ariosto, implicitly in his silence about almost everybody else.

I am not conscious of any unfairness or omission, though I do not pretend to a mere colourless impartiality, in this survey; and after it I think we may go back to the general question, may ask, Is this a great or even a good critic? and may answer it in the negative. That Boileau was important to his own time may be granted; that he was no ill scavenger of certain sorts of literary rubbish may be granted; that he gave help to those who chose to tread in the limited path to which France was confining herself, so that they might tread it with somewhat more grace, with much more of firmness and confidence than they would otherwise have done—that, in short, he did for France something of the same kind as that which Dryden did for England, may be granted. This is not exactly a small thing. But before we call it a great one we must look at the other side. Boileau did not, like Dryden, leave escapes and safety-valves to the spirit that was too mighty for the narrower channels of poetic style; he exhibited none of his contemporary's catholicity of mind and taste; he had none of his noble enthusiasms, none of his constructive power and progressive flexibility in positive critical estimate. The good that he did is terribly chequered by the consideration that, in sharpening certain edges of the French mind, he blunted and distorted others in a fashion which, after two hundred years, has not been fully remedied. A great man of letters, perhaps; a craftsmanlike "finisher of the law," and no ill pedagogue in literature certainly: but a great critic? Scarcely, I think.

La Bruyère and Fénelon.

Two writers at least, whom few would call lesser men of letters than Boileau, and in whom some may see greater qualifications for criticism, must be much more briefly dealt with, partly because in their case no controversy is needed, partly because their actual contributions to criticism form but a very small part of their work, and partly also because neither aimed at for himself, or has received from posterity and tradi-

tion, any very prominent place as a critic. These are La Bruyère and Fénelon. It would not be correct to say that either is in deliberate or conscious opposition to the *législateur du Parnasse*. Their general conscious principles are much the same as his; they are, like him, uncompromising defenders of the Ancients, and though Fénelon has a private crotchet about poetic prose, yet the non-essentiality of verse to poetry had been a general, if not a universal, tenet with antiquity. But whether in consequence of that impatience of despotism which those who love to mix literary and political history have seen in the second generation of the *siècle de Louis XIV.*, as compared with the first; or from the fact that, as compared with Boileau, they were much more of Greek,[1] and less of purely Latin students; or simply as a result of what has been justly attributed to both,[2] the predominance of the *sens propre* over mere observation of the *communis sensus*—it is certain that both, and especially Fénelon, display much more individualism, and at the same time much more catholicity. It may be added that they know more, and are to some extent (though to no large one) free from that hopeless ignoring of older French literature which was Boileau's greatest fault.

The "Des Ouvrages de l'Esprit."

La Bruyère's[3] contribution is contained in the opening section, "Des Ouvrages de l'Esprit," of his famous *Caractères*. It is not very long; it is—as according to the plan of the work it is not merely entitled but obliged to be—studiously desultory; and it is not perhaps improved by the other necessity of throwing much of it into portraits of imaginary persons, who are sometimes no doubt very close copies of real ones. But it contains some open and undisguised judgments of the great writers of the past, and a number of astonishingly original, pregnant, and monumentally phrased observations of a general character. In fact I should not hesitate to say that La Bruyère is, after Dryden, who had preceded him by twenty years, the first very great man of letters in

[1] "Greek, the Alpha and Omega of all knowledge," as Dr Folliott calls it, is certainly not less so in criticism than elsewhere.

[2] By M. Bourgoin in the interesting book cited above.

[3] Editions again innumerable; but none, I think, can compare with that of M. Servois in the *Grands Écrivains Français* (Paris, 1865-1882).

modern times who gave himself to Criticism with a comparatively unshackled mind, and who has put matter of permanent value in her treasuries without being a professional rhetorician or commentator. We need not dwell on the famous overture *Tout est dit*, for it is merely a brilliant example of the kind of paradox-shell or rocket, half truth, half falsehood, which a writer of the kind explodes at the beginning of his entertainment, to attract the attention of his readers, and let them see the brilliancy of the stars that drop from it. But how astonishing is it, in the 17th section, to find, two hundred years and more ago, the full Flaubertian doctrine of the "single word" laid down with confidence, and without an apparent sense that the writer is saying anything new![1] No matter that soon after, in 20, we find an old fallacy, ever new, put in the words, "Le plaisir de la critique nous ôte celui d'être vivement touchés de très-belles choses." If criticism does this it is the wrong criticism—the criticism *à la* Boileau, and not the criticism after the manner of Longinus. A man may have spent a lifetime in reading "overthwart and endlong" (as the *Morte d'Arthur* says) in every direction of literature, in reading always critically, and in reading for long years as professional reviewer, and yet feel as keenly as ever the literary charm which age cannot wither nor custom stale, — the "strong pleasure" of the beautiful word.

General observations.

But how well he recovers himself, among other things, with the remarks on the *Cid*, and the difference between the fine and the faultless at 30! with the declaration of independence immediately following in 31, and practically drawing a cancel through the whole critical teaching of Boileau! "Quand une lecture vous élève l'esprit, . . . ne cherchez pas une autre règle pour juger; il est bon." How delicate his remarks in 37 on the delicacy of touch, the illogical but impeccable concatenation, the justice of phrase, of the best feminine writing! Not a few of his observations are paraphrases or, as it were, echoes of Longinus himself, whom he has assimilated as Longinus' translator never could have done. And if some further remarks on criticism in 63 seem to regard rather the abuse than the nature

[1] "Entre toutes les différentes expressions qui peuvent rendre une seule de nos pensées *il n'y en a qu'une* qui soit la bonne," &c.—*Ed. cit.*, i. 118.

of the art—if the famous "Un homme né Chrétien et Français se trouve contraint dans la satire; les grands sujets lui sont défendus," is half a political grumble and half a paralogism, which was to be accepted with fatal results in the next century—both this and other things are redeemed throughout by the general independence and freshness of the judgment, the vigour and decision of the phrase. In the judgments of authors above referred to (which begin at 38 and continue for some eight or nine numbers, to be resumed with special reference to dramatists and dramas a little later), it is especially possible to appreciate La Bruyère's idiosyncrasy as a critic, the vivacity and power of his natural endowments in this direction, and his drawback, arising partly from sheer acceptance of prevailing opinion, and partly from the fact that he is merely coasting the subject on his way to others.

Judgments of authors.

In the joint or contrasted judgment of Terence and Molière the modern man, according to his kind, may find something either to laugh or to be irritated at. Some would as soon think of comparing the dribbling tap of a jar of distilled water to the Falls of Schaffhausen. But La Bruyère practically shows himself as conscious of the truth as his time would let him be when, allowing Terence purity, exactness to rule, polish, elegance, character (*i.e.*, type-character), he ruins all by admitting that "il n'a manqué à lui que d'être moins froid." And if (as many did then, and some do now) he takes that wrong view of style and language which permits them to accuse Molière of "jargon," of barbarism, he gives him fire, naïveté, a fount of real pleasantry, exact representation ("imitation") of manners, imagery, and "the scourge of ridicule." "What a man," he says, "you could have made of these two!" though how you can join fire and *froid*, and what would have been left of Terence's old-maidish neatness when joined to such a husband, Heaven and Apollo only know! But we can see very well that La Bruyère admires Molière because he does admire him, and Terence because he is told to do so.

The conjunction, even in contrast, of Malherbe and Théophile has puzzled some folk; but, as M. Servois points out, it is a mere matter of chronology, and Boileau had done it before. And it is very noteworthy that La Bruyère does not bear hardly

on Théophile. The remark that Marot seems more modern than Ronsard is perfectly well founded. And if there is some oddity in his surprise that Marot, "natural and easy as he is, did not make of Ronsard, so full of *verve* and fire, a poet better than either of them actually is," it is much less odd, and much more acute, than it looks at first sight. The judgment of Rabelais, a famous one, if not wholly wide-eyed, keeps its eyes singularly wide open for so artificial an age: and there is a whole volume in the double defence of Montaigne against opposite criticisms, to the effect that he is too full of thought for some men, and too natural in his mode of thinking for others.

It is by no means certain that the unnamed author aimed at in 52 is Molière, and the most fervent of "Cornelians" can hardly quarrel with the judgment that Corneille is unequalled where he is good, but more often unequal to himself. La Bruyère seems, though rather furtively, to set the awful Unities at nought in this great dramatist's favour; and he is both just and happy in praising the variety of Corneille as compared to the monotony of Racine. The whole article, which is a long one, is distinctly on the Cornelian side, though far from unjust to Racine; and one can well understand the disconcerting effect which it seems to have produced on Voltaire.

On the whole, the only reasons for not ranking La Bruyère's criticism very high indeed are that there is so little of it, and that it is obviously the work of a man to whom it is more a casual pastime than a business—who has not thought himself out all along the line in it, but has emitted a few observations. Still, those which express his deliberate opinions are almost always sound, and only some of those which he has adopted without examination are wholly or partially false.

The critical utterances of Fénelon[1] are much more voluminous,

[1] It is a pity that in the best modern account known to me, that of M. Bourgoin, the question of Fénelon's character and of his relations with Bossuet is brought in. It is really quite extraneous to the matter. Very favourable reference can be made to the notice by the Cardinal de Bausset, prefixed to the most accessible edition of Fénelon's critical work (in *Œuvres Choisies*, Paris, Garnier, n.d.) Bausset, who wrote, besides an extensive life of Fénelon, one of Bossuet, and died in 1824, came before the Renaissance of criticism in France: but he was no *perruque*.

though in part, at least, not quite so disinterested, and they are of very high critical interest and value. They are contained in two documents, the *Dialogues sur l'Eloquence* (which, though not known, is believed to be a work of his early manhood, but was only published after his death by the Chevalier Ramsay) and one of his very latest pieces, the *Mémoire sur les Occupations de l'Académie Française*, sent in, to obey a resolution of that body, in November 1713, with the much longer explanatory letter of the next year thereon to Dacier.

Fénelon. The Dialogues sur l'Eloquence.

The first is conditioned—unfavourably it may seem for our purpose—by its avowed limitation to *sacred* eloquence. A young aspirant to the cloth has fallen in love with a fashionable preacher, wishes a cooler friend to share his enthusiasm, and, being rebuffed, elicits from that friend by degrees a complete criticism of the rhetoric of the pulpit, and the rules that should govern it. Since we have found discussions, even of profane oratory, surprisingly barren in pure literary criticism of old, this of sacred may seem still less promising. But though Fénelon's interest in the soul-curing part of the matter is constant and intense, he does not allow it either to obscure or to adulterate his literary censure. At first, in particular, the arguments of his "A" (the critical friend who, no doubt, is Fénelon himself) not merely have nothing more to do with the pulpit than with the bar or the Senate, but have little if anything more to do with spoken than with written literature. The disdainful description (at p. 5 *ed. cit.*) of that epigrammatic or enigmatic style, which is always with us, as *des tours de passe-passe;* the excellent passage (ibid., 7-9) on Demosthenes, Isocrates, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Longinus himself—on whom Fénelon speaks with far more appreciation than Boileau, and probably with more knowledge than Dryden; the bold attitude taken up at p. 18 on the question of the perfect hero; the exaltation (perhaps the most noteworthy thing in the whole) of "painting," of bringing the visual image home to the reader, at p. 35; the scorn of mere verbal fault-finding at p. 47; the ardent panegyric of the literary greatness of the Bible at p. 69; and of the Fathers at p. 86 *sq.*—all these

passages, which are almost pure gold of criticism, have nothing special to do with the mere *métier* of the preacher. That Fénelon was neither perfect nor wholly beyond his time is quite true. He has here a deplorable assault on Gothic Architecture (which he repeats at greater length in the Academic letter, and for which, if he had not been so good and great a man, one could wish the stones of his cathedral to have fallen upon him), and his contempt extends to mediæval literature. But the same doom is on the best of archbishops and the most beautiful of girls: they can but give what they have.

Sur les Occupations de l'Académie Française.

And Fénelon gives very much. The Memoir and Letter above referred to were elicited by a demand on Academicians for proposals in regard to the reorganising of the work of the Academy. Here, therefore, as in the other case, the immediate purpose is special; but the general literary interests of the critic again prevent it from being specialised in the dismal and deadly modern sense. He does not fail to deal with the daily dreadful line of the Dictionary; but he proposes, as supplements, divers things—a new *Poetic*, a new *Rhetoric*, Chrestomathies from the Ancients on both heads (things needed to this day), and above all, a complete Academic edition of the great classics of France, with really critical introduction and annotations, or at least a corpus of critical observations on them.

But, as usual, it is in the incidental remarks that the value of the piece lies; and these make it, I do not hesitate to say, the most valuable single piece of criticism that France had yet produced. Fénelon shows his acquaintance with other modern languages; and pays a particular compliment to Prior, who, it must be remembered, was about this time occupying his rather uneasy post of Ambassador. He may be too hasty in saying that the Italians and Spaniards will perhaps never make good tragedies or epigrams, nor the French good epics and sonnets, as he most certainly is too ignorant in saying that "after our ancient poets" [a very few, mostly undistinguished persons, in the latter part of the sixteenth century] had tried classical metres and failed, "we" [the French of course] "had to invent

measures suitable to our words." But he is astonishingly bold in his recurrence to Pléiade principles, and in actually urging English as a good example on the point of taking from neighbours any word found convenient. He says plumply "de telles usurpations *sont permises*" (p. 103 *ed. cit.*) Alas! in England itself, and after two centuries, one uses this just liberty at personal risk. His Rhetoric section partly repeats the *Dialogues*, and is altogether more technical or professional than literary. But his Poetical section is full of interest. It is marred by that not quite single-minded fancy for prose poetry which has already been glanced at, and to which we shall have to return. But the attack on rhyme is partly excused, and the, at first sight, bewildering remark (p. 123) that "rhyme is of itself more difficult than all the rules of Greek and Latin prosody" is rendered intelligible, by a remembrance of the extremely arbitrary rules which had by this time been imposed on the French rhymer. The paragraph on Ronsard,[1] the best known piece of the whole, is admirable in its tempering of sympathy with censure; and the acknowledgment of the "opposite extreme" into which French for more than a century had fallen,[2] is one of the great epoch-making sentences of criticism. Of course it was not attended to; but for a hundred years and more French literature bore ever-increasing testimony to its truth.

And its challenge to correctness.

The censure of French drama is injured, partly by certain prejudices of the moralist and the theologian, and partly by less accountable crotchets. On Molière in particular, though he cannot help admiring the greatest of his contemporary countrymen, he is something from which we had best turn our faces, putting likewise into the wallet at our backs (and Time's) the complaints of *la basse plaisanterie de Plaute*, and the state-

[1] P. 125 *ed. cit.*

[2] "L'excès choquant de Ronsard nous a un peu jetés dans l'extrémité opposée; on a appauvri, desséché et gâté notre langue." And he proceeds, with much humour and more truth, to stigmatise the prim following of grammar, the "substantive hand in hand with its adjective," the verb "walking behind with an adverb at its heels, and an accusative in a place unalterable." "C'est ce," this great *locus* continues, "qui exclut toute suspension d'esprit, toute surprise, toute variété, et souvent toute magnifique cadence." 1830 could say no more; and often said it with less authority.

ment that *on se passe volontiers d'Aristophane.* The point is the quantity of opinion which is *not* for Oblivion's alms-bag. And, abundant as this is in Fénelon, the quality of it is more remarkable even than the quantity. He always prefers the study of author, and book, and piece, and phrase, to the study of Kind and the manufacture of Rule. Though he is in no sense an Anarchist, and may even have sometimes his cloth rather too much in his remembrance, yet he remembers likewise, and transfers to profane things, the sacred precept, "Prove all things: hold fast that which is good." The fatal fault of the extremest kind of neo-classic criticism—the weak point in all of it—is the usual refusal to "prove" the work, even to see whether it is good or not, if it fails to answer at first blush to certain arbitrary specifications. Fénelon is free from this: he has escaped from the House of Bondage.

We have for some time been occupied with the critical work of great men of letters; we must now turn to that of four men who, if they had not been critics, would hardly have been heard of in their own day, and would certainly not be remembered by posterity out of their own country—or perhaps in it. As it was, all the four exercised immense influence, not merely in France but elsewhere, and three of them saw their work promptly translated into English, and received with almost touching deference in the country which had Dryden to look to for criticism, nay, by Dryden himself. The order in which we may take them shall be determined by that of the appearance of their principal critical works. The *Pratique du Théâtre* of François Hédelin, Abbé d'Aubignac, appeared in 1657; the first *Réflexions* of Rapin in 1668; the *Entretiens d'Ariste* of Bouhours in 1671; and the *Traité du Poème Epique* of Le Bossu in 1675. All four, it is to be observed, were clerics of one sort or another, while Rapin and Bouhours were schoolmasters, and Hédelin was at least a private tutor. Taken together, they exhibit the hand-book and school-book side of the criticism of which Boileau is the contemporary satiric expositor to the world; and their criticism cannot properly be dissociated from his. As dates sufficiently show, they do not in any sense derive from him; nor, to do him justice, does

he from them. The whole quintet, with others of less importance, are all the more valuable exponents of the strong contemporary set of the tide in the direction of hard-and-fast "classical" legislation for literature.

The Abbé D'Aubignac.

It is among the few and peculiar laurels of the Abbé D'Aubignac to have failed in more kinds of literature than most men try. His tragedy of *Zénobie* (1647) was the occasion of a well-known epigram from the great Condé, which is not the less good for its obviousness, and which, with equal ease and justice,[1] can be adjusted to his criticism. He is more of an Aristotelian "know-nothing" than La Mesnardière, and has very much less talent. Not content with the *Pratique* (which, as has been said, was really a belated contribution to the cabal against Corneille), he attacked two of the great tragedian's later plays, *Sophonisbe* and *Sertorius*, in his *Dissertations en forme de Remarques* (1663), and he had many years earlier attempted to justify Terence against the strictures of Ménage. The historian of criticism would have been grateful to him had he confined himself to writing tractates "On the nature of Satyrs, Brutes, Monsters, and Demons,"[2] *Relations du Royaume de Coquetterie*, and novels like the rather well-named *Macarise*, or *the Queen of the Fortunate Isles*. For these we could simply have neglected.

His Pratique du Théâtre.

The *Pratique*, unfortunately, we cannot neglect wholly, because of its position as a symptom and an influence. In reading it,[3] the generous mind oscillates between a sense of intolerable boredom, and a certain ruth at the obviously honest purpose and industry that underlie the

[1] *Zénobie* boasted herself to be impeccably "regular." The Prince observed that he was much obliged to the Abbé for paying such attention to Aristotle, but that he could not excuse Aristotle for making the Abbé write such a tragedy. This famous *mot*, like others, is of disputed attribution. It is sometimes given to the Prince de Rohan-Guémené.

[2] A work of youth which appeared as early as 1627. Hédelin was never elected to the Academy; and in 1664 endeavoured to start a new one of his own from a coterie which he, in imitation of Conrart, had formed. But "Trajan was" *not* "content," wisely enough: and France was spared a skim-milk Forty.

[3] It forms the first volume of the Amsterdam edition, in 3 vols. (1715), of Hédelin's critical work. The second and third, which are together about the size of the first, include the extensive and dismal lucubrations on Terence, &c.

heaps of misapplied learning, and season the gabble of foolish authority-citing. He begins by a demonstration that all great statesmen have always patronised stately games, of which scenic representation is one. Vulgar minds have nothing to do with it (this was a slap at Castelvetro and his horrible doctrine of pleasing the multitude, which is a real *lethalis arundo* in the sides of all these Frenchmen). He is, we are rather surprised to hear, *not* going to theorise. All the theory has been done, and done once for all, by the ancients. What he wants to do is to apply this theory to all the practical contingencies. And this he does through Unities and Episodes, through Acts and Scenes, through Narration, Discourse, Deliberation, everything, with sleuth-hound patience on his own part, and requiring Job's variety on that of his readers. He is sometimes quite fair even to Corneille; he seems to be quite well-meaning; but he cannot help his nativity of dulness, and at his very best he is a critic of dramaturgy, not of drama.

Rapin.

René Rapin, hardly as one sometimes feels inclined to think and speak of him, was a person of an entirely different order. In fact, it is very much more on isolated and particular points than on generals that he lays himself open to reproach, though it may be retorted that the generals, which lead logically (as they usually do) to such absurd particulars, are thereby utterly condemned themselves. It was specially unfortunate for Rapin that his principles and precepts were at once caught up in England by a man like Rymer,[1] and expounded in coarse and blunted form to a people still green and unknowing in critical matters. There is even much in his

[1] Who translated (with a preface not virulently Rymerical, *v. infra*, p. 392) Rapin's *Reflections upon Poetry* almost as soon as it appeared. Rapin was a copious theologian, an elegant and fertile Latin versifier. Of his critical works in French, the *Comparaisons* noted above were produced annually between 1668 and 1671, except the "Thucydides and Livy," which appeared ten years later. The *Réflexions sur l'Eloquence* date from 1672: those, more famous, on Poetics and Poets, from 1674. His critical *Works* were early collected, and the complete collection appeared in English, by various hands, including Rymer's, in 2 vols. (London, 1706). The Amsterdam ed. of the original (3 vols., 1709-10) contains, in addition, a small treatise, *Du Grand et du Sublime*, which must not be neglected, and some others, together with the *Comparaison de Pindare et d'Horace* of the architect Blondel.

method which deserves high praise. It is very noteworthy that, before he presumed to draw up (or at least to give to the world) his *Réflexions* on the *Poetics* and on Poetry, on Eloquence, on History, and on Philosophy, he had preluded by elaborate examinations of the actual documents in the shape of "Comparisons"—"Of Homer and Virgil," "Of Cicero and Demosthenes," "Of Thucydides and Livy," "Of Plato and Aristotle."

His method partly good.

And though this sort of "cock-fight comparison" (as the more vernacular writers of his own time in English might have said) is "muchwhat" (as his translator Rymer actually does say) of a mistake, unless pursued with the greatest possible care—though it was already hackneyed in itself and constantly in need of extending, supplementing, blending—yet it is at any rate infinitely superior to the examination *in vacuo*, the rattling of dry bones and abstract kinds and qualities, to which too many of his contemporaries confined themselves.

His particular absurdities as to Homer in blame.

Unfortunately Rapin himself was always, consciously or unconsciously, tending towards this other method; and even in his comparisons—much more in the extended survey of ancient and modern writers which he subjoins to the *Réflexions*—he is still more constantly seduced by that labelling criticism which we have traced long ago to the "canonising" way of the Alexandrians, and for which we have said hard things of Fronto and others. Yet further, both his general style of criticism, and his prepossessions of this or that kind, constantly draw him into pitfalls only less absurd than those in which Rymer himself wallows. I do not remember that Rapin ever lays it down that a hero must not be a black man; probably the French had not been afflicted—for I suppose they did not make Syphax black—with any poet daring enough to start the question. But he does other things which, though less conspicuously, are quite as really silly. In the moral section[1] of his comparison between Homer and Virgil he has

[1] Chap. vii. In the preceding chapter there is one of those sentences which ruin this kind of criticism, by and of themselves. "Games are of the number of those actions which may occur in the lives of heroes." Most certainly: but one feels that Rapin said it simply because there are games in Homer and Virgil, and that, if there had *not* been, he would probably have said, "Games are *not*," &c.

too much of the Jesuit schoolmaster, with his reverence towards boys, to mention that terrible scene between Zeus and Hera which had already distressed the compatriots of Aristophanes and Martial, and which remains one of the earliest examples of absolutely perfect poetry in a particular kind. But he makes up for it. We have, of course, the "wine-heavy, dog-eyed, hare-hearted" line to mourn over. How undignified of Homer to make Achilles anxious about the preservation of the body of Patroclus from corruption! How could Ulysses, with such an excellent wife and such an amiable son, waste time with Calypso and dangle after Circe, to whom the pudibund Rapin applies epithets which *our* Decorum prevents us from repeating, and for which he deserved to be both shipwrecked and turned into a Gryll. Was it quite nice of Priam, as a father, to wish all his children dead so Hector were alive? Nausicaa is too shocking. A Princess's face should *not* show grace, the Jesuit thinks,[1] to men in Ulysses' condition.

As to Virgil in praise.

Whereas with Virgil it is quite different. Everybody, including the Gods, behaves "like persons of Quality." Even in the case of *Dido dux et Trojanus* there is no violation of modesty,[2] which certainly seems either a little Escobarish towards them, or a little severe to Circe and Calypso. Indeed, we sometimes find ourselves rather lost with Rapin's morality. For, in another passage (Chap. XIII.), he actually discovers *un artifice des plus délicats et des plus fins* in Virgil's taking away Dido's character, though History had made her a Lady of very good repute.[3] For he did it to bring into contempt the Carthaginians who were afterwards to become odious to Rome. "A nice marality!" indeed, as my Lord Foppington observed of another matter, not so very long after Rapin wrote this.

[1] "Cette Princesse oublie sa pudeur pour écouter sa compassion. . . ." In the rest of the clause the English translator softens the crudity of the French *curiosité*. But it is still more pleasant to oppose to the nasty niceness of the French Jesuit the words of the author of *The Christian Year*: "*Nausicaa—cujus persona nihil usquam aut venustius habet aut pudentius veterum Poesis*" (*Præl.* xii. vol. i. p. 195, Oxford, 1844).

[2] *Mais la pudeur ni toutes les bienséances extérieures n'y sont point blessées.*

[3] So the English: Fr. "femme de bien." I like to read Rapin in both versions, contemporary as they are, and antiphonal of the sentiment of the time, in its two chief languages.

Yet even here it is fair to observe that Rapin is at least trying to make the two ends of his "reason" and his "reflection" meet: and so it is always:—

> "His reason rooted in unreason stands,
> And sense insensate makes him idly wise."

As to others.

The consequences are patent on every page, and a chapter might be not disagreeably filled with them. Pegasus is admirable, but the Hippogriff is the vain imagination of a sick brain: Camilla touching, but Bradamante absurd. Achilles retires from the Grecian army because he is discontented; Æneas goes to Italy because he is pious; and Medea kills her children because she is revengeful—a passage in which it is agreeable to perceive the obvious first draught of "I love my love with an A." As for the moderns, Du Bartas and Ronsard had all the genius their age was capable of—a text for a sermon as long as this Book. "Scarce aught can be understood" of the *Agamemnon!* In fact, quotations[1] simply leap to the eye as one reads the page.

The reading of his riddle.

It is more important, if less amusing, to inquire how a man, obviously of much ability, extremely well informed, freer, it would seem, from mere prejudice than most of his fellows, came in this way to be constantly stumbling over blocks that the veriest blockhead might, one would think, have avoided, and running against blank walls, of which a blind man might, it should seem, have been aware. Rapin is, perhaps, the main and appointed Helot of the neo-classic system. That system, instead of assembling all the great works of literary art, and giving an impartial hearing to each, takes one or two ancient treatises, themselves necessarily based upon but a partial examination, spins out of them a universal code, fills in that code, where it is wanting, with analogies and with perilous makeshifts of "decorum," uniformity, and the like, and then proceeds to apply the result back to the actual works of

[1] These latter are mostly from the *Réflexions sur la Poétique* (*Œuvres*, ii. 175 *sq.*) It is quite at the beginning of these that the unlucky charge against Dante of "wanting fire" (see i. 175 *note*) occurs; it is followed later, and perhaps to some extent explained, if not excused, by the further criticism that he has "l'air trop profond," "une ordonnance triste et morne."

art. It is no wonder that, even of the ancient division of these, hardly one escapes scot-free, except those which were originally composed by men of great, but not the greatest, genius, on a somewhat similar scheme. Elsewhere the unfortunate critic is constantly catching himself in those bushes which he has himself planted, and bruising himself against obstacles which he has elaborately set up. In a general way he grants that Homer is the greatest of poets; but the Fetiches of "Design" and "Decorum" extort from him the sacrifice of this in detail, and the acknowledgment that Homer is frequently most indecorous, and that large parts of him are out of drawing. And so of all.

Le Bossu and the Abstract Epic.

Le Bossu (to whom the English sometimes give a superfluous final *t*, whom they generally defraud of his rightful "Le," and whom in the main they know only from the *locus classicus* of Sterne)[1] reapproximates to the Aubignacian level. But it is fair to say that his dulness arises from a different cause. He is not, like Hédelin, a stupid man—he is distinctly the reverse—nor is he spiteful. He is merely the hardiest and most thoroughgoing devotee of a certain kind of abstract criticism. He does, of course, give us chapters on some actual illustrations of Heroic or Epic; but they are scarcely more necessary to his book than the picture-illuminations of a poem or a novel. Being a writer of some *esprit*, he sometimes exercises it in rather dangerous fictions—for instance, his imagined epic of Meridarpax, where all the mouse-stories (mouse and lion, town and country mouse, &c.) are worked in, would be most sprightly, if it did not look sprightlier still as an exercise in laughing at his own side. But by far the greater bulk, and the whole vertebration and solid substance, of his argument are devoted to Epic in the Abstract. Design, definition, and parts; good fables and bad fables; episodes; the biology, so to speak, of the Action, the narration, the manners and characters, not forgetting the

[1] *Tristram Shandy*, iii. 12. He was not always unknown among us. Dryden, whether out of modesty, fashion, or humour, takes leave to call him "the best of modern critics," and he was translated in 1695. The mistakes referred to above are all the worse because there was actually a French writer named Bossut, a mathematician of distinction in the eighteenth century.

Machines, and at last something on the Thoughts and Expression—which have about one-ninth of the whole. In short, if we have not exactly Epic *in vacuo*, we have it as a dried preparation. The complexity, anti-sensuousness, and dispassionate character of it are almost abashing; one feels at the end that, to hanker after an actual poem, be it *Iliad* or *Orlando*, has something sinful—something of the lust of the flesh.

We have said that Le Bossu is rather a sprightly person of a hyper-scholastic kind. His brother Father, Bouhours, is still more so; indeed, his famous inquiry, "Si un Allemand peut-être bel-esprit?"[1] has got him rather into trouble with a prevailing party, in and out of Germany. Beginning with the *Entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène* (1671), a collection of chiefly verbal criticism on French writers, he continued it with other works in *belles lettres* and theology, the most important of which, to us, is *La Manière de Bien Penser dans les Ouvrages d'Esprit* (1687).[2] The book, which is not short, consists of four Dialogues between Eudoxe and Philanthe, "deux hommes de lettres (as the author remarks in a phrase to which Time has given a piquant new meaning) *que la science n'a point gâtés.*" Eudoxe, as the name indicates, is the author's mouthpiece—a judicious admirer of the Ancients, who can yet tolerate such moderns as Voiture. Philanthe (also a speaking name) is a partisan of florid modernity, who is, however, so little of a "stalwart" that he gives up Ariosto, and intrenches himself behind Tasso and Lope. In the First dialogue Eudoxe censures (with abundant citation, as throughout the book) Equivoques, Hyperboles, *pointes, concetti,* and, generally, thoughts that are "not *true.*" The Second and Third, starting from Longinus and Hermogenes, discuss the true and the false in Sublimity and Wit: and the Fourth is mainly devoted to Obscurity. Bouhours (whose influence on subsequent critics, especially on Addison, was very great) writes agreeably, is free from rudeness and pedantry, and is altogether rather a favourable example of the school of Good Sense, *quand même.* But,

Bouhours.

[1] *Not*, as it is constantly quoted, *peut avoir de l'esprit.* It will be observed that the difference is considerable.

[2] My copy is the 2nd ed. of next year in 12mo.

as favourable examples of bad schools generally do, he damages his cause more than less favourable ones, because its drawbacks are more obvious and intrinsic. On his principles you must ostracise the best, the noblest, the most charming, the most *poetic* things in poetry. *Et c'est tout dire.*

Encyclopædias and Newspapers.

As we approach the close of the chapter, we come upon classes and masses of work which is at once impossible to examine in particular and, as a whole, elusive. In 1687 appeared the *Jugements des Savants*[1] of Baillet, and ten years later the still more famous *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* of Bayle, who had preluded it, from a time antecedent to that of Baillet's publication, by *Nouvelles de la République de Lettres*, a regular literary review. Long before this latter the *Journal des Savants*[2] and the *Mercure Galant*[3] in France had provided criticism, good, bad, and indifferent, with regular outlets for itself. And in both kinds—that of the dictionary or encyclopædia, and that of the periodical—the flood has never ceased, but has always increased since. Fortunately for us the impossibility of treating all this is compensated by the fact that such treatment, if possible, would be superfluous. But of Bayle and Baillet at least something must be said particularly, and something also of a remarkable and much less known continuator of the latter.

Bayle.

Bayle perhaps needed nothing but better taste, greater freedom from prejudice, and a more exclusive bent towards purely literary criticism, to be one of the great literary critics of the world. But, unluckily for himself, he had contracted, through corrupt following doubtless of the Latins (even such respectable persons as Pliny) and of the scholars of the Renaissance, a sort of perpetual itch and han-

[1] The standard edition is that of La Monnoye (7 vols. 4to, Paris, 1722, with an 8th containing Ménage's *Anti-Baillet*, &c.)

[2] Jan. 1665 — first weekly, then monthly. It became a government publication in 1701. Gui Patin, in the March after its appearance, is very angry (Let. DCLXV. iii. 517, *ed. cit. sup.*) with it, and says with voice prophetic of many injured ones to come, "nous verrons si ces prétendus censeurs, *sine suffragio populi et Quiritium*, auront le crédit et l'autorité de critiquer ainsi tous ceux qui n'écriront pas à leur goût."

[3] 1672-1820. Donneau de Visé was its first editor, and Thomas Corneille its most distinguished writer.

kering after the indecent, which, to say nothing else, is as teasing and as tedious in the long-run as an itch for sermonising and a hankering after instruction. Equally tedious, and in much worse taste, is the perpetual undercurrent—not seldom becoming a very obvious top-flood—of sceptical girding and nagging at the Bible and at religion generally. In both these respects Bayle was followed by Voltaire. But Voltaire, though his own literary sympathies were perhaps not his strongest, had some. Of purely literary sympathies Bayle seldom shows much trace—by which it is not in the least meant that he is not a man of letters himself, for he is an excellent one, and the reproaches which have been addressed to his style are not of much importance. But it is not literature that he really loves: it is "philosophy" of a kind, and gossip of almost all kinds. His wits are always bright and alert, and his learning, though associated with so many qualities opposed to those of the mere pedant, and not impeccable, is pretty sound. He has the curiosity, the acuteness, the erudition, the industry of the true critic, but he has neither the enthusiasm, nor the disinterestedness, nor the grasp.

Baillet.

In both these respects, as in others, Baillet is very much a diminutive of him. In fact, brightness of wit has almost disappeared; and though Ménage—himself no infallible guide—has been both ill-mannered and hypercritical in the strictures of the *Anti-Baillet*, there is no doubt that the *Jugements des Savants* is a book not to be used without verification on particular points. But this is almost a property, or, at worst, an inseparable accident, of these *Collectanea;* and a fair-minded reader cannot help admiring the extraordinary industry with which Baillet executed his task, while appreciating the significance of this record of a division of literature which, as we saw at the close of the last volume, had, scarcely two centuries before, the most meagre representation of all.[1]

[1] It can scarcely be necessary to give bricks of so large and rambling a house. "Mr Borrichius témoigne aussi que le style [*of Ovid's Heroides*] est fort pur" is, and has to be, the kind of thing. Perhaps such a glut of authorities may have insensibly nauseated men of authority, and so Baillet may have worked both ways. He is good enough to admit (v. 461) that "one cannot say this nation [the English] is inferior even for Poetry to several others of the North,"

Curiously enough the want of judgment with which Baillet has been, and to some extent may justly be, reproached shows itself exactly in the most unlikely place. His opening volume on the nature, legitimacy, and so forth of Criticism, though too prolix, collects an extraordinary number of just and valuable things, and adds to them at least something of the author's own. His Character of a Pedantic, Chicaning, Malicious Critic (partly borrowed from Le Bon, partly elaborated by himself) will be found at vol. i. p. 52, and has been justified by some seven generations of the persons it describes. It is Pedantry "to pick low and little faults, and to excite yourself over matters which are of no importance." It is Pedantry "to steal from an author and insult him at the same time; to tear outrageously those who differ with you in opinion." It is Pedantry "to endeavour to raise the whole world against some one who does not think enough of Cicero." It is Pedantry "to take occasion by an author's mistake to endeavour to humiliate him and ruin his reputation." It is Pedantry "to send your author back in a haughty manner to the lowest class, and to menace him with whip and ferule for an error in chronology." It is not merely Pedantry but Chicanery "to separate phrases in order to give them another sense," to "impute printers' errors," to "neglect or change punctuation." We need not go on to Baillet's signs of "Malignity": the cap is already a good cap, a very good cap, and one need not go far to find some one to wear it.

The ethos of a Critical Pedant.

A boiling down of this volume—which, so far as I know, has never been executed—would be far superior to most general works on the subject with which I am acquainted. Nor is Baillet's distribution of his scheme altogether a bad one. It is in the detailed carrying out (where one would suppose that for a man of such industry the least part of the difficulty lay) that he is most unsatisfactory. He neglects—in a manner surpris-

and he has heard of "Abraham Cowley, John Downe ou Jean Donne, Cleveland, Edmond, [*sic*] Waller, Jean Denham, George Herbert, le Chancelier Bacon, Shakespeare, Fletcher, Beaumont, Ben, Johnson, Suckling, Jean Milton," &c. It is open to Shaconians to contend that as the comma at "Edmond" is undoubtedly superfluous, so is that at "Bacon," and that Baillet—the learned Baillet—meant to rank "le Chancelier Bacon-Shakespeare" among poets.

ing from one of that still scholastically educated generation of ecclesiastics, who were wont positively to abuse division and subdivision—the most obvious and mechanical assistances of method. His first sketch of subdivisions, though wanting succinctness, is not ill; but he never really carries it out, and stuffs in its stead long collections on "Precocious Persons," "Authors in Disguise," and "Les *Anti*" (books of a polemic character with titles so beginning), which belong only to the curiosities of Criticism. Further, he never seems to have set out, in any of the divisions, with a preliminary list of the authors he meant to handle, so that his omissions and inclusions are equally surprising. And, lastly, he never seems to have worked out any preliminary calculus of the amount of space which such authors as he does admit proportionately deserve. But the extent of his knowledge is astounding, and the way in which he communicates it not disagreeable.

Gibert.

Baillet's unmethodical prosecution of his task was in this fortunate for us that it induced a somewhat younger contemporary, Balthasar Gibert, to take up the rhetorical-critical side of his work, and continue it in a book[1] not very much known but of great value. In strict date it belongs to the next century, and therefore to the next Book, but we have always taken, and shall always take, liberty of protracting or foreshortening our views as may be desirable; and this is avowedly a supplement to Baillet, though limited in subject, allowing, in consequence, fuller treatment of individuals, and displaying a good deal more originality and judgment. Gibert excellently supplies Baillet's admitted insufficiency as to Longinus; he is very copious on Hermogenes, who had been coming, from Sturm downwards, into more and more estimation; and if in his accounts of the Italians he shows a tradi-

[1] *Jugements des Savants sur les auteurs qui ont traité de la Rhétorique* (3 vols., Paris, 1703-16). M. Bourgoin, I think, refers to Gibert, but the book was first brought seriously to my notice by a very kind private communication from Professor Scott of the University of Michigan. Luckily it is in the British Museum; but it does not seem easy to obtain a copy for oneself. Gibert taught for some half-century in the Collége Mazarin, and was repeatedly rector of the University of Paris. He wrote other books,—a formal "Rhetoric" *juxta Aristotelis doctrinam*, strictures on Rollin, &c.

tional rather than an adequately comparative estimate,[1] he is sufficiently modern to give a quite considerable abstract of "M. Mackenze" (*sic*), *i.e.*, Sir George Mackenzie's *Idea Eloquentiæ Forensis Hodiernæ*. That he "but yaws neither" between Rhetoric and Criticism is a point of no importance against him; and it is a valuable document for the gradual transformation of the one into the other.

The Ancient and Modern Quarrel.

We have to terminate this chapter, as we shall have to begin the corresponding one in the next Book, by saying something on the famous—the much too famous—Battle of the Ancients and the Moderns; but the space which we shall give it on both occasions will appear strangely, and perhaps scandalously, short to some readers. Neither idleness nor caprice, however, can be justly charged against the contraction. In the first place, things generally known may be justifiably passed with slighter notice in a continuous history, which has to deal with much that is very little known. From all sides, and in all ways, the Battle of the Ancients and Moderns is very well known indeed. It enjoys, and for more than a generation has enjoyed, the advantage of occupying one of the best monographs ever written. It engaged, on repeated occasions, the attention of the best equipped and the most readable of all French, if not of all, critics—Sainte-Beuve. It was arranged—not ill if not wholly well—for popular English consumption by the expert skill of Macaulay. As a result partly of Swift's genuine literary sympathies, partly of his more or less accidental connections, the commentators of one of the greatest writers not only of England, but of the world, have been driven to expound it: as have, for more essential reasons, those of more than two or three great or interesting writers in France — Boileau, Perrault, Fontenelle, and others. From all this almost everybody must have learnt something about it, and to some of all this almost everybody can fairly be referred if he wishes to learn more.

For the matter is not really of so much importance in the History of Criticism as it may at first sight appear to possess.

[1] See, for instance, his reference to Patrizzi, who is evidently to him rather *magni nominis umbra* than anything tangible.

Its small critical value.

These quarrels rarely do much critical good; for the critical issues are almost always obscured in them, first by the *animus* and prejudice of the combatants, and then by the mere dust of the fighting. But this particular combat did perhaps the least good of all; and could have done the least good. It was indeed sufficiently inevitable: for the sort of deification with which the whole of the sixteenth century, and most orthodox authority in the earlier seventeenth, had regarded antiquity, was sure to breed revolt. But it led to no conclusion; it evolved no truth. Truth is not the daughter of Ignorance; and it is really hard to say which party shows most ignorance in this matter. The defenders of the Ancients knew, as a rule, next to nothing of the Moderns; and the defenders of the moderns knew a great deal too little of the ancients. La Motte knew no Greek if Perrault[1] knew any; and with Boileau not only to all appearance was English literature a blank sheet, but almost the whole sheet of French literature before his own time was either blank or inscribed with fantastic fallacies. Still, this is not a condition entirely or commonly unknown in squabbles of this kind. The signal distinction and disqualification of the advocates in this famous cause is that, as a rule, neither any of the leaders, nor any of the juniors, had taken more than the slightest trouble to get up, or at least to understand, his *own* brief. The Ancients are here in a little better case than the Moderns; but they were not in so very much better case. Most of them knew the Latin classics fairly well; and some of them (though by no means all, or even many) had a fair, while a few had a good, acquaintance with Greek.[2] But, with rarest, if with any exceptions, they persisted in exaggerating, if not in contemplating solely, that side of Classical Literature which

[1] His *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes* (1688-98) is most disappointing, even to fervent opponents of "the sect of the Nicolaitans" and fervent lovers of the *Contes de ma Mère l'Oye*. That he knew little and that his case was bad does not matter; but I at least cannot find the *esprit* which apologists plead.

[2] J. Warton (*Adventurer*, No. 49) asserts, on the authority of Ménage, that even Rapin was "totally ignorant" of Greek. M. does not quite say this: but he does say that R. got his Greek quotations from Tanneguy-Lefèvre, Madame Dacier's father (*Ménagiana*, i. 175 of the collected ed.)

has been and must be admitted to be its principal side, but which is not the only one. They would not see—or if they saw, they expressed positive distaste for—the vaguer, more imaginative, more "Romantic" beauty of Greek, and in a less degree of Latin. They never dreamt of turning the tables on their antagonists, as they might have done to no inconsiderable extent, from this point of view. And by holding up Design, Order, Decorum, and the rest, as paramount conditions of literary excellence, they laid themselves open to the most inconvenient retorts from well-equipped adversaries, and even received some on the score of Homer, badly as their adversaries were equipped as a rule.

On the other hand, the Moderns were, for the most part, like men who have Toledos by their sides and choose to fight with cabbage-plants. The French ignored the English and sneered at the Italians and Spaniards since the Renaissance, indulging the while in placid but contemptuous ignorance or misrepresentation of everything before it out of Italy. The English were prepared to admit that nobody had achieved sweetness in English numbers before Mr Waller, apologised (except Dryden and Dryden only in a few moments) for Shakespeare, and thought Chaucer a good funny old savage.

Out of such a welter of blundering little good could come, and no good came save one. It is, I believe, absolutely impossible to trace, in so much as one single filament, the extension and deepening of critical appreciation which began in the next century to the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns. But that quarrel did excite and feed the critical spirit and appetite, and did give signs of an as yet half-blind craving for the possession of critical knowledge.[1]

[1] Perhaps it is still desirable, though almost for the last time, to observe that the omission of casual criticism in non-critical work is intentional and necessary. Nowhere could more interesting examples of it, from Molière downwards, be produced; but this is only a temptation, not a reason.

CHAPTER II.

THE ITALIAN DECADENCE AND THE SPANIARDS.

DECADENCE OF ITALIAN CRITICISM—PAOLO BENI—POSSEVINO: HIS 'BIBLIOTHECA SELECTA'—TASSONI: HIS 'PENSIERI DIVERSI'—AROMATARI—HIS 'DEGLI AUTORI DEL BEN PARLARE'—BOCCALINI AND MINORS—INFLUENCE OF THE RAGGUAGLI—THE SET OF SEICENTIST TASTE—SPANISH CRITICISM: HIGHLY RANKED BY DRYDEN?—THE ORIGINS: VILLENA—SANTILLANA—ENCINA—VALDÉS—THE BEGINNING OF REGULAR CRITICISM: HUMANIST RHETORICIANS—POETICS: RENGIFO—PINCIANO—LA CUEVA—CARVALLO—GONZALES DE SALAS—THE 'CIGARRALES' OF TIRSO DE MOLINA—LOPE'S 'ARTE NUEVO,' ETC.—HIS ASSAILANTS AND DEFENDERS—THE FIGHT OVER THE SPANISH DRAMA—CERVANTES AND CALDERON—GONGORISM, CULTERANISM, ETC.—QUEVEDO—GRACIAN—THE LIMITATIONS OF SPANISH CRITICISM.

THAT the Italians, who had some half of the last Book to themselves, will not have a tithe of the present, is due, on the part of the historian, neither to laziness, nor to love of contrast, nor to that rather illogical and illegitimate generosity which decrees that "the other citizen shall have his turn." The disproportion simply corresponds to the facts. Italy, indeed, continued to devote herself with something like enthusiasm—or at least with the *engouement* of dilettantism and the doggedness of pedantry—to critical studies. Some at least of the earlier writers of the century—aftercrops of the sixteenth—still exercised considerable influence: and for nearly the whole of the time the great Italians of the former age—Scaliger, Castelvetro, and others—maintained an authority which did not pass to France till the eighteenth itself was approaching. But little was really added

Decadence of Italian Criticism.

to the critical canon of the central Peninsula. Paradoxers like Beni, eccentrics of different kinds like Tassoni and Boccalini, respectable compilers like Possevino and Aromatari, must occupy us and receive their due. But all these belong more or less to the first quarter of the century. The second, third, and fourth are much less fertile, and it is not till another meeting of the ages that we shall come to another really remarkable group, consisting of two at least painful literary historians, among the earliest of their kind, in Crescimbeni and Quadrio, of a real though limited critic in Gravina, and of a remarkable combination of erudition and insight in Muratori. And these will properly be treated in the next Book, not in this.

Paolo Beni.

Paolo Beni, who has been spoken of in the last Book,[1] and who was a man of nearly fifty when the sixteenth century closed, had nevertheless nearly half his literary life to spend in the seventeenth, and published the most noteworthy of his works at this time. We saw that he was a strong "Torquatist," and an innovator in respect of recommending prose for tragedy as well as for comedy. As he grew older the iconoclastic tendency so developed in him that he may almost be called the leader of Rebellion in the matter of the Ancient and Modern Quarrel; for *questa lite*, as a contemporary of Beni's calls it, had been fought out in Italy long before it became a burning one in France and England. Beni was a "modern" of the extravagant kind: and his two chief critical manifestoes, after the Dissertation on Prose Drama, were a *Comparatione di Homero Virgilio e Torquato*,[2] where the author of the *Gerusalemme* (which Beni prefers to call by its other title, *Goffredo*) is exalted far above both the ancient Poets; and an *Anti-Crusca*,[3] in which, with the futile courage of his opinions, he gives no more quarter to Dante and Petrarch than to Homer and Virgil on the score of language at least, and would apparently turn "modernity" almost into "hodiernity." This does not argue any great critical spirit: and we find little in Beni—only the sort of Old Bailey advocacy, or attack, which was rapidly coming to be the disgrace of criticism. There is not "the real integrity

[1] *V. supra*, p. 107. [2] Padua, 1607. [3] Padua, 1612.

and perfection of the fable" in the *Odyssey*. Even Virgil cannot approach Tasso in regularity, nice derangement of episodes, &c., &c. The most amusing thing about Beni is the way in which he turns the batteries of the classics on themselves. He does not attempt to make a new Poetic for Romances, nor does he take his favourite poem on its own merits and extol it for them. The "parts," the "qualities," the "rules" are practically adopted: and it is shown—or at least asserted—that Tasso exhibits them all in greater perfection than the ancients. This is the line afterwards taken by Addison with *Paradise Lost*.

Possevino. His Bibliotheca Selecta.

The *Bibliotheca Selecta* of Antonio Possevino, Jesuit negotiator and teacher, is a good example of the kind of compiling work which the great development of Criticism was imposing on at least some critics. From some points of view it also may seem to belong rather to the last Book, for Possevino, who retired from active work in many countries to his native land and an old age of study in 1586, brought it out first at Rome in 1593. But he made alterations and rearrangements in it afterwards, and the edition I have used[1] was published, with his own approval and assistance, a few years before his death, and well within the seventeenth century. It is a mighty folio (or rather two in one) dealing with something like the whole range of studies, and intended, it would seem, rather for teachers than learners; but the First Book[2] has something, and the three last much, to do with our subject. In these three Possevino successively discusses History at enormous length[3] and with considerable bibliographical information, Poetry[4] at somewhat less, and finally the Art of Letter Writing, under the special title of "Cicero," but with reference also to Libanius and others. Possevino, as was in fact inevitable from his profession and his purpose, is very much cumbered about orthodoxy and morality, especially in the poetical department; but he does not allow himself to be wholly guided by these considerations. Scaliger's *Poetic* he

[1] 2 vols. fol., Cologne, 1607.

[2] *De Cultura Ingeniorum*.

[3] Lib. xvi., 150 folio pp.

[4] "*De Poesi* et Pictura" is the title to which he calls attention, but to which he does not fully work up.

calls *spissum sane opus*—a happy but rather ambiguous epithet; quotes Gambara, Minturno, Cinthio, Pigna, and Patrizzi as main authorities, and though he says that he will *not* quote Castelvetro, as being on the Index, evidently means that he should be read, though he duly prescribes Caro as an antidote. He has a good selection of extracts, mighty lists of books and authorities, and an inserted tract (two in fact) by Macarius Mutius on Poetry and Christian Poetry, by which he sets much store, but in which little will be found but rhetoric.

Tassoni. His Pensieri Diversi.

Some of the most interesting and suggestive, if not the most regular, criticism in this part of Italian literature is to be found in the *Pensieri Diversi* of Alessandro Tassoni.[1] The author of the *Secchia Rapita* was not likely to be dull in anything that he undertook: and his undertakings were of a sufficiently various kind.[2] In his *Considerazioni*[3] on Petrarch he treated that revered sonneteer and his sonnets as cavalierly as he was to treat the sacred Heroic Poem in the *Secchia:* but this kind of *frondeur* spirit was nothing new in Italy. The *Pensieri,* in which their author was candidly prepared to find people discovering "extravagance and capriciousness," are modelled on Aristotle's *Problems,* and Plutarch's *Symposiacs* and *Roman Questions.* They deal with curious matters "such as are wont to come into the discourse of Gentlemen and Professors of Literature," a phrase where the "and" is half complimentary and half the reverse. On perusing the contents we find that gentlemen and professors of literature talk about the radical humours, and the reason of the spots on the moon, and why it is that ugly ladies are loved, and a very great many other interesting things. They do it, moreover (at least Tassoni does it for them), in a very interesting manner—that peculiar early seventeenth-century mixture of learning, fancy, and humour which, in still greater measure, gives Burton and Browne their quintessenced charm. If Tassoni had pushed

[1] 4to, Venice, 1646. There are earlier and later editions. Tassoni, who published this first, I believe, at Rome [Carpi?] in 1620, had preluded it (Modena, 1608) with a smaller volume of *Quisiti.*

[2] He meddled boldly with politics, and I have a little modern edition of his *Filippiche contra gli Spagnuoli,* &c. (Ferrara: Le Monnier, n.d.)

[3] Modena, 1609. I have not yet met with this.

that question about the *donne brutte* home, he might have rediscovered, against his own age, the great secret of criticism; but of this we may treat more properly in the Interchapter. It is not till the Tenth Book of the *Pensieri* that he attacks literature, save by incidence and tangent; and then he plunges full into the Battle of the Ancients and Moderns, devoting twenty-seven out of twenty-eight chapters to an elaborate comparison of the two periods, in every class of art, science, and literature itself. But he preserves his invincible quaintness by going off in the twenty-eighth to a very elaborate study of the Hangman (*Il Boia*), which readers of Joseph de Maistre should not fail to compare with the *Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*.

Tassoni deals with the general question in the same curious indirect and ironical fashion in which he handles the charms of *bruttezza*, and the reason why it was specially rude (let us say, though he does not) of Spenser to call the husband of Hellenore Mal*becco*. He begins by advancing, and even seeming to countenance, the "Modern" argument for Progress, as being the law of nature and so decisive of *questa lite*. But he very soon turns round, and gives reasons and instances for the much sounder doctrine of Fluctuation—not merely in general, but in regard to particular Arts. Therefore it is necessary to examine these Arts; and then he does this. Once more he becomes a "Modern" in awarding to his countrymen the palm of grammatico-critical studies. In Logic and Philosophy generally, he thinks they can match the Latins, and though they yield to the Greeks, may make some fight even with them. He will pit Guicciardini, Comines, and Giovio against any of the ancients, which is a little rash; putting Machiavelli with others in a second rank. And on the modern side of Oratory he urges, with his unconquerable unexpectedness, Peter the Hermit and John of Munster! But on the Poets this unexpectedness of his turns to the disappointing. He gives us a very unnecessary classification of Kinds, obviously in order that he may quote his own *Secchia* as a new kind, the Heroi-comic. But it is interesting to find him dividing the *Commedia* into "Heroi-satiric" for the *Inferno*, Heroic mixed with Hymnic for the *Paradiso*, and a division (not, as in the *Inferno*, a *blend*)

of Heroic and Satiric for the *Purgatory*. Except on this head of *questa lite*, in which he is a notable forerunner of later disputants, Tassoni has little that is positively critical. And if he shows on the one hand a singularly active and inquiring spirit, such as may any day discover fresh and promising outlooks, he shows us also the risk of mere fantastic "problem"-raising, to which a century of active criticism was leading a century of Academies.[1]

Aromatari.

Tassoni's Petrarch-blasphemies brought him into collision with Giuseppe Aromatari, of whose original work, including his part in this battle,[2] I do not know much. But Aromatari was responsible, many years later, for a remarkable encyclopædia or *corpus*, which may very well follow the *Pensieri Diversi* as a pendant to Possevino's work already mentioned, and as illustrating the learned and scholastic side. It is entitled *Degli Autori del Ben Parlare*,[3] and, if its grammatical and Rhetorical divisions had been succeeded by a similar collection of Poetics, it would have gone far to cover, in a certain peculiar and limited way, the entire field of criticism. As it is, not a few of its documents extend in the poetic direction. Its first volume gives the promise of an almost unique thesaurus, starting with illustrative and comparative extracts from Hesiod, Lucian, Cicero, Xenophon, &c., then giving the whole of Dante's *De Vulgari Eloquentia* in the Italian, and following this with Trissino's *Castellano*, Tolomei's *Cesano*, a discourse of Varchi, and "Opinions" from Mutio, Doni, Dolce, Citadini, and others, all on the subject of the Vulgar Tongue. Other treatises, including Bembo's, with less famous ones by Alunno, Delminio, and others, follow; while two whole parts are given up to Salviati's *Avvertimenti della Lingua* on

[1] Attention was first recalled to Tassoni in recent times by M. Hippolyte Rigault in his *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*. But I was not myself introduced to the *Pensieri* by that excellent book, and the things in them which seem to me most interesting are not quite those which struck M. Rigault.

[2] This is referred to, in the extract from Leone Allacci prefixed to the 1646 ed. of Tassoni, as *libellus Patavii editus*. Tassoni seems to have replied under a pseudonym and pretty savagely (*magis aculeatis dentibus*).

[3] Eight volumes, in 16 parts, of a not small quarto (Venice, 1643). This is one of the many books for the opportunity of studying which, without burdening shelves and lightening purse, I am indebted to the Library of the Faculty of Advocates.

Boccaccio. Not seldom the grammatical matter touches points very important indeed to criticism, as for instance in vol. vi., where Buonmattei enters on the question (made a burning one in France by Malherbe) whether popular or literary usage is to be the standard of correctness.

His Degli Autori del Ben Parlare.

The Rhetorical part has the additional interest of combining ancient and modern matter—of being, in short, a kind of compressed *Rhetorici Græci et Latini* with modern additions. Sometimes the texts are given simply in whole or part — Aristotle, Longinus, Hermogenes being thus treated—while an Introduction to Hermogenes by Giulio Camillo Delminio shows how strongly the authority of that master was working, and how much it had to do with the insistence on criticism by Kinds and Qualities. Sometimes a *catena* of authorities on particular matters is given—as in the case of Tropes and Figures, where the chain stretches from Quintilian to Mazzoni. Only specialists, probably, will care to investigate profoundly the huge commentary-paraphrase of Panigarola on Demetrius Phalereus, readjusted to the purposes of sacred Oratory, though the book had a great vogue in its day. But one turns with more interest to the work of Patrizzi on Rhetoric, much less known as it is than his *Della Poetica* and *Della Storia*. It has, however, hardly any of the interest of the *Poetica*, being almost entirely devoted to the *subjects* of the orator, and philosophical rather than literary in its handling. But this great medley of Aromatari's shows us, better perhaps than any single book except Baillet's, and nearly fifty years before it, the bulk and importance of the position which the critical consideration of literature was taking among literary studies.

Boccalini and Minors.

The literary side of Boccalini's *Ragguagli di Parnasso*[1] is less than the political. But the list of seventeenth-century treatises in Italian on critical subjects is long.[2] Some of them are difficult to procure out of Italy, and I doubt whether many are worth the trouble of hunting down. I am sorry that the work of Chiodino da Monte-Melone[3] has hitherto

[1] Venice, 1612-13.

[2] See Professors Gayley and Scott's invaluable book so often cited, p. 447, a passage based on Blankenburg's older *Zusätze* (3 vols., Leipsic, 1796-98).

[3] Venice, 1613.

escaped me, because of the extreme beauty of the name, which would seem to qualify its author for the post of Chief Rhetorician to Queen Pintiquinestra. Pellegrino, Fioretti, Zani, Querengo, Menzini have not been or shall not be forgotten. But I have experienced, and fear again, the sort of disappointment which occurs when, for instance,[1] one is told, of Carlo Rinaldini,[2] that the third part of his *Philosophia Rationalis* "contains a tolerable Poetic." One attacks the mighty double-columned folio, and finds a purely scholastic treatise of the familiar kind, beginning with *Poetice, Poeta, Poesis, Poema* as of old. It is impossible to say *Non debes quadrillare* in this fashion—the company is too ancient and venerable; but it is permissible to decline to play, on the strength of having had enough of the game already. There is a certain established conformity of propriety between times and books. At no time can a frank commentary on Aristotle be out of date or out of place; at this time the Poetics of Le Bossu and Bouhours, faulty as they are, were at any rate responsive to the form and pressure of the day. But such work as Rinaldini's, however respectable, has neither the intrinsic excellence which conquers time, nor the fleeting but real grace of temporal congruity.

Influence of the Ragguagli.

The *Ragguagli di Parnasso* themselves are of less importance to us for their actual critical utterances (which, as has been said, were not Boccalini's first object) than for the extraordinary influence which they exercised on the form of criticism throughout Europe for more than a century. Suggested more or less directly by Lucian (whose enormous effect on modern European literature, though of course never missed entirely by any competent person, has never yet been fully allowed for) they hit the taste of the day straight and full. Not merely did they start the whole fleet of "Sessions of the Poets" and the like in England, but they had a great influence on the English prose Essayists of the early eighteenth century;[3] while in France even the severe Boileau paid them unacknowledged royalty. It is no uncommon experience to find that books which in this way

[1] Blankenburg is the sinner here.

[2] Padua, 1681, pp. 1025-1088.

[3] Henry Cary, Earl of Monmouth, translated the book in 1656.

create a kind of "rage" at one time, become chiefly sources of boredom at another; but Boccalini certainly illustrates the fact, in his literary portions at any rate. He deserves some credit for having made current, if he did not invent, the famous story of the choice between Guicciardini and the galleys. There is some critical appropriateness in the fable of Tasso being refused admission by Castelvetro on the alleged strength of Aristotle's rules, of the reprimand bestowed by Apollo on the philosopher, and of his excuse that he never meant his observations for "rules" at all. To this the age might have paid more attention than it did. But one finds thinness in the fun of Justus Lipsius attacking Tacitus for impiety, and of Thrasea and Priscus being warned, as they value their stoical characters, not to go and see Vittoria Colonna and Veronica Gambara too often.

The set of Seicentist taste.

In the History of Taste as distinguished from that of Criticism the important point of the *Seicento* is of course that development of floridity—of Marinism—which is associated in literary history with the very term. But this development was common to Italy with all Europe; and though the country still exercised a sort of prerogative influence, "Marinism" is not so much the mother as the elder, and not by so very much the elder, sister of Gongorism in Spain, of the extravagances of the age before Boileau in France, of the "metaphysical" fashion in England. It will be better to treat these in the Interchapter, both in themselves and as fastening "correctness," by way of reaction, upon Europe.

Spanish criticism—Highly ranked by Dryden?

Spain has never ranked very high in the general estimate as a contributor to European criticism: and though this estimate has not been too solidly founded, the *communis sensus* seems here to have exercised that mysterious power of appeal to the world-spirit which so often keeps it from going hopelessly wrong.[1] There is,

[1] Spain can boast, however, perhaps the very best *History* of its criticism as a whole that any European language has—if not as yet the only good one—in the *Historia de las Ideas Estéticas en España* of Don Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo (Ed. 2, 9 vols., Madrid, 1890-1896. This is fortunate for me, inasmuch as I do not pretend to any extensive familiarity with Spanish literature beyond the early poets, and indeed do not read the language

however, one remarkable piece of testimony which, if it were a little better authenticated, would give Spanish critics a very high position as teachers. We shall see in a future chapter that Dryden (as has indeed been generally, though, until recent times, but vaguely, allowed) is himself one of the great turning-points of the critical story of Europe. Now Spence says that Bolingbroke told him that Dryden had assured *him* that "he got more from the Spanish critics alone than from the Italian and French and all others together." Unfortunately Spence speaks at second-hand; and Bolingbroke, even if he really did say this, is always a Bardolphian security. Moreover, Dryden, who was not at all in the habit of concealing his indebtedness, but, on the contrary, seems to have "felt an innocent warmth" of pleasure in mustering and marshalling his authorities, quotes no Spanish authors. And the references (which are fairly numerous) to Spanish plays in the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* neither quote, nor necessarily show knowledge of, Spanish critics at all. It has been thought that Dryden may have read Tirso de Molina's *Cigarrales* (*v. infra*); and it has occurred to me that something in his attitude may have been derived from Lope's *Arte Nuevo de hacer Comedias*. But I do not believe this to be at all certain, or even very probable.[1]

with very great facility. Besides Señor Menéndez I have relied chiefly on the texts and comments recently furnished (*v. inf.*) by M. Morel-Fatio (who will, I hope, continue in so good a road), on Ticknor, on the short but valuable notices of this period in Mr Spingarn, *op. cit.*, on those in my friend Mr Hannay's *The Later Renaissance* (Edinburgh and London, 1898), and on Mr James Fitzmaurice Kelly's *History of Spanish Literature* (London, 1898). I am particularly obliged to Mr Kelly for a copy of the recent (undated) Spanish translation of his book, with a few corrections, and a preface by Señor Menéndez himself. The Spanish critic combines, with a just praise of the book, a mild remonstrance as to the small space which Mr Fitzmaurice Kelly has given to this very critical subject—a fact in which I own I myself had felt some comfort. The silence of the specialist is the shield of the expatiator. I have not failed, wherever I could, to verify all the critical deliverances in the text, and examine almost all, if not all, the books mentioned; but I do not know the *circumference* of them as I do elsewhere. And as I began this History on the principle of going to the sources, I think myself bound to warn the reader of any case in which I have been obliged to modify that principle.

[1] This was written before M. Morel-Fatio had expressed the same view in his *Les Défenseurs de la Comedia* (*Bulletin Hispanique, ubi cit. inf.*) See also on the point Mr Ker's *Essays of Dryden*, i. lxvi, and the references in his index to Dryden's mention of

The Origins —Villena.

Intrinsically, however, Spanish criticism before the eighteenth century, though not extraordinarily rich nor furnishing any documents of extreme importance, is interesting, and in one point almost supremely so, for circumstances if not for contents. The trail begins fairly early, though the scent is scattered at uncommonly long intervals. A glance was made towards the close of the first volume of this book at the actual beginnings. They were due to two persons of the greatest distinction in the early fifteenth century—Enrique, Marquis (?)[1] de Villena and Master of Calatrava, of the blood royal both of Aragon and Castille, and Iñigo Lopez de Mendoza, Marquis of Santillana. The *Arte de Trobar*[2] of the former, a treatise on the Gay Science, was sent by him, a year before his death, in 1434, to the latter; and Santillana himself touched criticism, or at least Poetics, both in the Preface to his *Proverbs*, and still more in a letter to the Constable (Dom Pedro) of Portugal, written about 1455, not long before his own death, and containing observations not merely on Poetry in general, but on early Spanish poets up to his own times. This document was fortunately, and most wisely, prefixed by Sanchez to his collection of the older Spanish poets, and is easily accessible in the re-edition of Ochoa,[3] or in the Appendix to Señor Menéndez' *History*, vol. ii.

Santillana.

The Marquis begins, after compliments, by the usual generalities about poetry containing "useful things covered with a very pretty coverlet, composed, distinguished, and scanned in certain number, weight, and measure." So "as

Spanish plays. Of course the main interest of the matter lies in the much stronger resemblances that exist between the great English and Spanish dramas than between any other two national branches of the European theatre.

[1] They say now that he was not only not (as used to be said) the premier and only Marquis of Spain, but not a Marquis at all. *Non moror: non sum invidus*—especially as the next monographer will probably restore the Marquisate.

[2] I have duly looked this up in what appears to be the only accessible place (a place valuable for other documents), the *Orígenes de La Lengua Española*, Madrid, 1737, of Mayáns y Siscar. It is merely a tissue of troubadours' names, scholastic citations, and minute details of pronunciation and versification. Señor Menéndez has reprinted part of it in the Appendix to his second volume.

[3] *Poesias Castellanas anteriores al siglo* xv. (Paris, 1842) pp. 13-17.

fructiferous gardens abound and give convenient fruits," &c., &c., with Tully to give security. But for all his own very pretty coverlet of rhetoric, the Marquis talks very good sense. He is sure that verse is above prose, basing himself soundly on Isidore of Seville and his proofs from Hebrew literature, with the Greeks to follow, and Cassiodorus to back up Isidore. Then he comes to modern times—to Petrarch and Robert of Naples, to Boccaccio and John of Cyprus, quoting the *De Gencalogia* itself, and therefore, in a very interesting way, gearing on Spanish criticism, even in these its rudiments, to Italian, then not much less rudimentary. He divides styles properly into "sublime," "middle," and "low," liberally placing all those who write in Greek or Latin in the first class. The middle contains those who write in any vulgar tongue; the low those who merely botch up romances and songs for the common people, without order or rule. Dante wrote the *Commedia "elegantemente,"* and Boccaccio composed proses of *grand eloquencia* in the manner of Boethius. Santillana then shows himself well read in Provençal, French, and Catalan, as well as Italian. He refers to the *Roman de la Rose* and its authors, to "Michaute" (Machault), Otho de "Crantzon" (Granson), "Alen Charrotier," whom, naturally, he much admires. He thinks the Italians surpass the French in genius, the French the Italians in art. Then he turns to Spain, and beginning with those who have written in the Provençal style, comes to Gallegan, Castilian, &c., later, mentions the chief poets, gives the metres in which they have written, and ends with a (mis)quotation of Horace[1] and a shower of classical allusions—among others to *aquellas dueñas que en torno de la fuente Elicon incesantemente danzan.* For even then the modern confusion of the Mount and the Fount had begun. The piece is, if not very advanced criticism, at any rate an early and interesting critical glance over European poetry in the Romance tongues.

Villena, as his title shows, and Santillana to some extent, had been considering Catalan and Galician as the chief poetic media

[1] *Quem nova concepit olla* servabit odorem. It may be observed that, on the principles of Low Latin scansion from Commodian downwards, the first four words will do well enough.

for Spaniards; it is different with Juan del Encina, who, in 1496,[1] prefixed an *Arte* to his *Cancionero* nearly half a century after Santillana wrote, and almost as long after an earlier *Cancionero*, that of Baena, the compiler of which does not seem to have been tempted to criticism. The nine chapters of this deal with the origin of Castilian poetry, the distinction between the art of poetry and the *arte de trobar*, while both *have* an art; the necessities of the *trobador*, feet, consonance and assonance, verses and couplets, poetic "colours," &c., and a general conclusion on writing and reading poetry. The book shows a certain Italian influence which distinguishes it from earlier work; but which, when that Italian influence had been repeated in stronger dose, seemed to later generations insufficient and out of date. Still, it is interesting, and earlier than anything of the kind in vernacular Italian.

Encina.

Another half-way house may be found in the interesting *Diálogo de La Lengua* or *de Las Lenguas*[2] of Juan de Valdés, which has even been called "an important monument of literary criticism." It is rather, however, linguistic than literary, though the author deserves to rank with other national heroes of the time for his strenuous support of the vernacular, which he thought a more "corrupted" representative of Latin than Italian, and respecting which he held the odd but characteristically Renaissance notion that Greek, not Basque, was its remoter ancestor. He mentions the romances and the *Celestina*.

Valdés.

But the regular course of technical and elaborate Spanish criticism does not begin, after these long preliminary stages, till quite the close of the sixteenth century. The earlier course of that century has indeed supplied Señor Menéndez with a

[1] I have used the somewhat later Grenville copy in the British Museum, Salamanca, 1509, fol.; and Señor Menéndez' reprint in the Appendix to his second volume, which also contains one or two other early documents.

[2] The plural was used in the version of Mayans y Siscar (*Orígenes, v. supra*), which was long the only one accessible. In 1860 a better text appeared at Madrid with the singular, which Ticknor and Mr Kelly approve. For any one who professes no Spanish scholarship to set himself against these authorities may seem absurd. But in the book itself *sub finem* the author writes "habiendo considerado *estas tres lenguas*," and the changes are rung on Latin, Tuscan, and Spanish throughout.

tolerably fair herd of humanist rhetoricians to fill the ninety pages of his ninth chapter. The list is headed by Antonio de Nebrija (Nebrissensis), *De Artis Rhetoricæ compendiosa coaptatione ex Aristotele Cicerone et Quintiliano*, in 1529. But the only names of much interest that appear in it are those of the famous Luis Vives, disciple of Erasmus and of Oxford, with his anti-Ciceronianism, and with at least some admission (the passage is quoted by Señor Menéndez at vol. iii. on p. 226 from the *De causis Corruptarum Artium*), that it does not matter in what language a man writes in so far as faults and impurities of diction and the duty of avoiding them are concerned; and of the equally famous preacher Luis de Granada, with his *Rhetorica Ecclesiastica*, a good deal later. Still, the metrical *Rhetoric* (1569) of Arias Montano, that "Lope of Latin verse," a piece of didactic much more spirited and really poetical than Vida's *Poetic*, on which no doubt it is modelled; and the vigorous if mistaken scholasticism of Francesco Sanchez ("El Brocense"), in his attempt to subject Rhetoric entirely to Logic, deserve some notice. So, perhaps, does Alfonso Garcia Matamoros, who, though Señor Menéndez conscientiously suspects him of not being very original, stumbled upon a remarkable anticipation of Buffon in the definition *Est stylus habitus orationis, a cujusque hominis natura fluens.* This is a slight but distinct advance on the earlier one of Fox Morcillo, *De Imitatione* (1544), which gives it as something *quæ vel pro ingenio cujusquam, vel rei, quæ in questionem vocatur, ratione varietur.* These writers, however, seem (except El Brocense, who dealt on more than one occasion with the Horatian *Art*) to have given little or no attention to Poetics, and in fact to have allowed themselves to drift a good deal to leeward of the purely literary side of Rhetoric altogether. When the ship bore up again for this side, the Spaniards, like everybody else in Europe without exception, took the Italians for their schoolmasters; and they might seem all the more certain to be docile pupils in that their poetical practice — their practice indeed in all sorts of regular writing — had long been under the same influence. Boscan had more or less deliberately Italianated

The beginning of regular Criticism. Humanist Rhetoricians.

Spanish poetry[1] half a century before Rengifo,[2] and Pinciano, and La Cueva, in the last decade of the sixteenth century and the first of the seventeenth, began to theorise. At the same time there was a very important point of difference between Spain and all other European nations, except to some extent England. In the contents of the Cancioneros—perhaps not in actual form very old, but stretching back by tradition and association to the very blending-time of Goth, and Cantabrian, and Latin—and in the drama which had been so rapidly maturing from Naharro to Lope de Vega, the Spaniards had two mighty, popular, and intensely anti-"regular" forms of literary composition. The critical "dependence" therefore—the point to be fought out—was, "Which was to prevail?"

Mr Spingarn's thesis, that translation of the *Epistle to the Pisos* is the invariable prelude of original critical work, completes its proofs, as far as the Latin races are concerned, by the version of Espinel which appeared in 1591, and was followed in the very next year by Rengifo's *Arte Poética Española*. Of the former there is little to say, for though Espinel was a man of literary gift (he was the author, it may be excusable to remind the reader, of *Marcos de Obregón*, and so a slight, though only a slight, creditor of Le Sage), he did not add anything original to his translation. The latter has been sometimes rather unkindly spoken of by those who do not like formal Arts of Poetry. Those, on the other hand, who have weak places in their hearts for such things may give Rengifo shelter therein. He reminds one at very first sight of his Italian originals in the comely small quarto of his *format*—the book-size of all others which retains a certain dignity without entirely forfeiting the benefit of the Archpriest of Hita's celebration of *dueñas pequeñas:* he has a beautiful folding plate of a

Poetics. *Rengifo.*

[1] After a conversation with Navagero which he has reported, and which is, in its way, also a critical document.

[2] Señor Menéndez refers to two *Poetics* anterior to Rengifo, neither of which I have seen. The first, by Miguel Sanchez de Lima (sometimes called de Viana), Alcala, 1580, has a slight interest in the wording of its title, "*El Arte Poética* en romance castillano." The second—which from its date (1593) would seem to be a little later than Rengifo, though the historian mentions it first—is Hierónymo de Mondragon's *Arte para componer en metro castillano* (Saragossa, 1593).

Labyrinto—one of the artificial forms which are dear because they maddened the eighteenth century—and he gives a large *Sylva* or rhyming dictionary. I do not know that there is much else to be said for him, but he is a symptom.[1] So, some twenty years later is, on the other side, the severe Cascales,[2] who in his *Tablas Poéticas*[3] lays it down that "if any part of a fable can be changed without loss, this fable is not well managed." There was a contemporary of Cascales in a country which loved not Spain, neither was loved of her, who would have changed you every part of every one of his fables, and left the versions so that you could not tell which was the better.

Pinciano.

Some years after Rengifo came Pinciano, and ten years later the Spanish attempt to rival Vida and Vauquelin in the *Ejemplar Poético* of Juan de La Cueva. The two are opposed on the point which was rapidly becoming the burning question of Spanish literary criticism, but which was never thoroughly faced in Spain. The great national drama—in main part, if not in every respect, Romantic to the core—was making progress every day; but so was the theory that you were to follow the ancients. Alfonso Lopez, otherwise "El Pinciano," did the latter diligently in his *Filosofía Antigua*

[1] The above paragraph was written from notes taken while reading Rengifo at the British Museum. In subsequently reading Señor Menéndez on him I was surprised to find the learned historian protesting against the Labyrinth, and other such things, as having been foisted in *cir.* 1700-1720, and referring to the editions of 1592 and 1606 as alone genuine. But the British Museum copy *is* that of 1606! Let it by us even be said to Rengifo's credit that, like Sidney, he felt the charm of old romance. See M. y P., p. 320.

[2] "The inexorable Cascales," as Señor Menéndez calls him in a passage which I had not read when I wrote the text. Of Cascales, as of Pinciano (*v. infra*), the Señor thinks far more highly than I do. Both seem to me (though Cascales more than Pinciano) to be simply uncompromising Aristotelians who borrowed from the Italians; but, like most borrowers and imitators, hardened and emphasised what they borrowed. Both were forced to allow little "easements" in regard to the drama; but only such as are consistent with Aristotle's text, though not with some glosses on him. And Pinciano simply translates the Aristotelian definition of tragedy, while Cascales, doubtless with reference to the different heresies of Castelvetro and Giraldi, is quite Athanasian in his doctrine that poetic verities are absolutely unchangeable, and independent of custom and time.

[3] The book appeared in 1616; but I have had to use the reprint of 1779. I have not seen Mesa's *Compendio de la Poética* (Madrid, 1607) or Carillo's *Libro de Erudicion poética.*

Poética,[1] which, besides the authorities indicated in the title, owed much to the Italian school.

Pinciano[2] is set extraordinarily high by the Historian of Spanish criticism, who thinks him "the only humanist of the sixteenth century who presents a complete literary system," contrasts him (I own that this gives me pause) with the "intolerable pedantries" of Castelvetro, and calls him plumply "an excellent critic." The quotations advanced, though, according to Señor Menéndez' admirable custom with authors difficult of access, they are plentifully given, will perhaps hardly justify this praise. Pinciano thinks that "the soul of poetry is the fable"; that metre is not necessary, though it "perfects imitation"; that imitation itself must have verisimilitude; that poetry is superior to metaphysic; that it ranges over all the arts and sciences; that it gives things in a new form, makes them new to the world; that a perfectly organised fable is like a perfectly organised animal; that it is absurd for a hero to be born, grow up, become bearded, marry, &c., all in one piece. He prefers the probable-impossible to the improbable-possible, disapproves of classical metres, and so forth—all of which we have, I think, heard before. Señor Menéndez attributes to him *altísimo entendimiento crítico* for rejecting the common (and certainly absurd enough) division of comedy and tragedy by the happy or unhappy ending, and vesting the comic element in Ridicule. And he winds up by constituting Pinciano, with Cascales and Gonzales de Salas, "the luminous triad of our *preceptists* of the good age."

Recurrence to, and study of, the book itself as given by Señor Peña will not, I think, remove the doubts about this high estimate of the *Filosofía* which even Señor Menéndez' own quotations may have started. It is a book of much learning, ingenuity, and labour, the somewhat non-natural

[1] Madrid, 1596.

[2] The *Filosofía Antigua* is extremely rare, and does not appear to be in the British Museum either under "Pinciano" or under Lopez, his real name. Fortunately there is a recent reprint (Valladolid, 1894), ed. by Professor Don Pedro Muñoz Peña, which I duly possess. It may be observed that bibliographers and librarians are particularly hard on the laity in the Spanish department. It is surely needless to make one hunt in vain for an author of world-wide reputation under his world-name till one runs him to earth as *Gómez de* Quevedo [*y*] *Villegas*.

form of which (the recounting in letters to a certain Don Gabriel by El Pinciano [1] of conversations between himself and two friends, Hugo and Fadrique) may, like much else in it, be due to Italian influence. That of such writers as Fracastoro is obvious in the philosophical aloofness of the first Epistle-dialogue, *De la Felicidad Humana*, in which the nature of virtue, the character of the Pagan divinities, and many other solemn things are discussed, with some curious ones, such as whether *nobleza* can be predicated of Lais either for her beauty or her eminence in an *oficio deshonesto*. It is Don Gabriel's answer which deflects the subject with some sharpness into *una Arte Poética en romance*, and this, beginning in the next letter, occupies the rest of the book. The divisions are pretty usual: first, the general qualities of, and objections to, Poetry; then its nature, its different kinds, the Fable, Poetic diction, metre, tragedy, and comedy; dithyrambic, epic, minor poetry; and lastly, "Actors." Pinciano calls these divisions modestly enough *Fragmentos*, but no just exception can be taken to them on the ground of scrappiness. The book is methodical enough; its *aperçus* (as, for instance, on *furor poeticus* and poetic diction) are often acute, and its expression not seldom has the quaint raciness of Spanish.[2] But it still "sticks in generals"; it still holds those generals to have been settled once for all of old; and it still gives no sign of any catholic examination of actual poetry.

On the other hand, La Cueva,[3] though meticulous enough, and citing with high reverence [4] not merely Aristotle and Horace,

[1] Señor Peña, himself a professor (*catedrático*) of Valladolid in Rhetoric and Poetry, explains that this surname was taken by distinguished *alumni* of that University, and derived from the Roman city (Pincia) supposed to have existed on the site. Few definite dates or facts seem to be known about Alfonso Lopez, except that he was physician to Mary of Austria, daughter of Charles V. and widow of Maximilian II. during her life at Madrid from 1576 to 1603, and that he wrote, besides the *Filosofía* and other things, a poem on Pelayo, *languide nec eleganter*, one regrets to hear.

[2] As where Fadrique substitutes, for the stately old image of the honey on the edge of a bitter cup, the familiar *come quien dora una píldora*, "as one who gilds a pill," ed. cit., p. 120.

[3] *Ejemplar Poético*, first printed, and, I think, still only to be found, in the *Parnaso Español*, Madrid, 1774, vol. viii.

[4] See Spingarn, p. 146, who gives the passage.

but Scaliger himself, Vida, Minturno, Viperano, and others, is, on the drama at least, and especially on comedy, an utter contemner of the ancient doctrine. My friend Mr Hannay's pithy statement[1] of this Spanish point of view has already commended itself to good judges,[2] and it seems to sum up the whole matter. "The theatre was to imitate nature and to please. Poetry was to imitate the Italians, and satisfy the orthodox but minute critic." There had been something of this in Castelvetro; there was more in the Spaniards, and it was fatal to them as critics.

La Cueva.

Of the authors of this group with whom I am myself acquainted, none seems to me to stand higher than Gonzales de Salas on the Aristotelian-Senecan side; while few exhibit rehashings of the common stuff to be found in all the Italian books more strikingly than Carvallo in his *Cisne de Apolo*.[3]

Carvallo.

Gonzales de Salas,[4] on the contrary, strikes me as having shown distinct and original critical power. A foreigner is not likely to be greatly disturbed, even if he be a better Spanish scholar than I am, by the "palpable" darkness,[5] the "accumulation of obscurity and troublesomeness" in style, with which Señor Menéndez reproaches Salas. It is an odd thing, but might be paralleled elsewhere, that the foreigner, who does not know what the man *ought* to have said in order to convey his meaning properly, can, in nearly all languages, arrive at that meaning more easily than the native, who is "put off" by eccentricity and barbarisms. Words, for instance, like *lucifugas* and *parasangas*, which Don Marcelino holds up to special reproach, are to an Englishman, with his Virgil and his Xenophon in his head, perhaps easier reading than some of the bluest-blooded words of pure Spanish. The critic is further

Gonzales de Salas.

[1] *The Later Renaissance*, p. 39.

[2] Cf. Spingarn, p. 233.

[3] (With a much longer title), Medina del Campo, 1602. The quaint title is connected with a quainter fancy, that the poet is noble as such—a "Knight of the Swan." Señor Menéndez makes some use of Carvallo, but admits that he is *pedagogo adocenado*, "a common dominie."

[4] *Nueva Idea de la Tragedia Antigua*, &c. Madrid, 1633.

[5] *La misma lobreguez y el mismo desconsuelo*, M. y P., iii. 364.

enraged by Salas's devotion to Seneca, whose *Troades* he actually translated, with observations and exercitations thereon. But (as students of English at least should know) there is much Romantic virtue in your Seneca along with his Classical vice. The curious thing about Gonzales is that—fervent Aristotelian as he is in theory, and devotee of the ancient theatre down to the Tragic Boot—he has singular "pluckings of apples by the banks of Ulai," strange glimpses of the truths which his countrymen were the best situated of all men in Europe (with hardly the exception of Englishmen) for seeing, but which as a rule they would not see. Both Pinciano and Cascales had eulogised Nature or *Naturaleza;* but as the foundress or foundation of Laws which Cascales at any rate would have as those of the Medes and Persians. Gonzales, Aristotelian as he is, on the other hand, says in so many words,[1] "You are not bound to follow the ancients," "Time and taste may improve and alter art." Señor Menéndez thinks this liberty a Spanish trait; but we find it in some Italians, though not many, and we certainly do not find it in all or many Spaniards, who are much rather inclined to divide their attentions, or, as the impudent old Greek definition has it, "to keep the wife for convenience and decency, the mistress for pleasure." Gonzales, I think, saw a higher law.

These authors, however, and others who succeeded them, though worthy wights and good workers in labouring the lea of Spanish criticism, in no case possess the interest which attaches in all literatures to those who are at once eminent in creation and careful in criticism. The place of Corneille in French, of Jonson and Dryden in English, is taken, earlier than any of these, by one of the great and three of the greatest writers of Spain—Tirso de Molina, Lope, Cervantes, and Calderon.

The contribution of the "creator of Don Juan" to criticism is not large, and it comes in an odd place, but it is of importance. In the curious medley called *Cigarrales* [say "tales of a country-house"] *de Toledo*,[2] Tirso has included a play of his

[1] In the passage quoted by M. y P., iii. 366, 367.

[2] Madrid, 1624. Noted by Señor Menéndez (who has given the whole passage, iii. 457-60) as a specially rare book. Fortunately the British Museum,

own, *El Vergonzoso en Palacio*, and has given us a discussion of it by the company at p. 184 of the book. A "presumptuous person" attacks the poet for "licentiously deserting" the limits and laws of comedy. He has stated the strict Unities, and is contrasting the action of the play with them, when he is interrupted by a certain Don Alejo, who carries the war into the enemy's quarters bravely. Comedy must be ended in twenty-four hours, must it? It is quite decent and probable, is it not, that a gallant shall fall in love with a lady, court her, treat her, win her, and marry her all in a day? Where are all the delightful accidents of love—the hopes and the despairs—to go? A real lover must be proved by days and months and years of constancy. Why may not comedy present to the eye what history presents to the understanding—much time in little? The ingenuity of the playwright consists [I abbreviate here a good deal] in making things probable *as they are related*. The very difference of nature from art is that the one, from its creation, cannot vary—a pear-tree always producing pears, an ilex its own acorns, influenced only by soil, climate, &c. But drama varies its own laws, and grafts tragedy on comedy. And he then boldly sets Lope, to whom he gives the title of *reformador de la comedia nueva*, as an example of modern art against Æschylus and Euripides and Seneca and Terence, explaining the dramatist's declaration, *v. infra*, that he had deserted the ancients to please the Popular taste, as due only to his natural modesty. This is real plain speaking: and the speech is worthy of the author of the *Burlador de Sevilla* and the striking *Condenado por Desconfiado*.

The Cigarrales of Tirso de Molina.

Tirso's apology for his great craftsfellow was not more superfluous than his defence of him was bold and well framed. Not merely in the verse *Arte Nuevo de hacer Comedias*,[1]

according to a wise habit of its own in such cases (cf. Capriano), has two copies, and M. Morel-Fatio has included the piece which concerns us in an invaluable collection (also including Lope's *Arte Nuevo* and other things) of Spanish critical documents, which he is issuing in the *Bulletin Hispanique* of the Faculty of Letters of Bordeaux, and republishing separately (Paris, Fontemoing; Bordeaux, Feret, 1901-1902). The man who gives a text attains merit which mere commentators and historians can never hope to have imputed to them.

[1] Also reprinted by M. Morel-Fatio in the issue noticed above.

but elsewhere, does Lope make the somewhat undignified and pusillanimous, but, as we have said, widely entertained, excuse referred to. Señor Menéndez himself can only plead (a little obviously, perhaps) that "there were two men in Lope," the great popular Spanish poet, and the educated versesmith, full of academic tradition. Very much the same mixture is seen in Dryden, from whom, as we shall see, inconsistencies quite as great as Lope's, and much more numerous, can be quoted. But the contrast, I think, brings out the characteristic weakness of the Spanish critical spirit. Its historian admits frankly that there is a good deal in Lope that is "infantine." I should add that he seems to me never to have taken any side of criticism with seriousness, whereas Dryden successively took many. Both had to confess that they had been sometimes traitors to their own best ideals of poetry, to please the multitude; but Dryden, at least, never committed the blasphemy of condemning his own best things as Lope did, and thanking God that he himself knew the precious "precepts," according to which he did *not* write them. The simple fact seems to be that a man of Lope's extraordinary facility and fecundity could not be critical. In the time that Dryden took to write *Alexander's Feast* the Spanish poet would have done you an Epic, half-a-dozen plays, and minor poems enough to fill a volume. Señor Menéndez himself avows that he cannot pretend to be acquainted with all the critical remarks interspersed in Lope's enormous and never yet collected work: and who shall venture to rival his extensive knowledge? But we shall probably not be rash in thinking that any real doctrine, except on details of craft, would be hard to extract from them. The man was a genius, but not a critical genius: and it certainly was within the resources of a very humble critical faculty to note, as it is his chief critical glory to have noted, in theory, as he expressed it in practice, the fact that "Points of honour move all people mightily" on the [Spanish] stage.[1]

Lope's Arte Nuevo, *&c.*

[1] *Los casos de la honra son mejores, Porque mueven con fuerça a toda gente*—*A.N.*, 327, 328. At least one of Lope's innumerable works, the *Laurel de Apolo*, written late in his life (1630), is busied with the poets of his time in the fashion of Caporali and Cervantes, but, it would seem, in a spirit of wholly uncritical panegyric.

The tractate consists of not quite 400 hendecasyllabic lines, arranged in irregular stanzas from five to fifty lines long, and blank except for the last two lines of each stanza, which form a rhymed couplet. It has a rather erudite air at first sight; but M. Morel-Fatio has ruthlessly shown that almost all, if not all, the passages which give it this appearance are translated literally from Robortello[1] or from Donatus. It begins by a complimentary address to the Academy of Madrid, which had, it seems, asked the poet for the treatise, and then passes into the slightly ignoble apology-boast, already referred to, as to his own knowledge of the *preceptos* and the barbarism, the *rudeza*, of the established and popular notion of drama. He defines comedy as imitating actions and manners of men—not royal and lofty actions like tragedy, but humble and plebeian—gives an exceedingly perfunctory sketch of Spanish, and a much fuller one of ancient, drama, and then relapses into his exercises and denunciations of

"La vil chimera deste monstruo cómico,"

with a promise to "gild" the error of the vulgar, and discover, if possible, a sort of *via media*. But one is not surprised to find that he has almost directly to blaspheme one of the very chief of his revered *preceptos* by admitting that

"Buen exemplo nos da naturaleza"

of the mixing of the tragic and the comic. So, too, like a new Naaman, he bows in the House of Rimmon by admitting that the Unity of Time *must* be broken, though you are to hide the breach if you can. Minor details of dramaturgy fill a large part of the piece, with an especial recommendation of keeping the interest of the audience on the tenterhooks. But he cannot finish (the finale includes a boast of having written 483 comedies

"Con una que he acabado esta semána")

without another ungracious fling at the "vulgarity" and the "barbarism" of the Muse he serves, and a confession, in which some have seen humour, that all the 483, "except six,"

[1] *V. sup.*, pp. 49, 50 note. It is fair to say that Lope quotes Robortello.

sin gravely against true art. Certainly humour is not an unknown quality with Spaniards; but it cannot be said that, if Lope uses it here, he uses it gracefully.

His assailants and defenders.

Still Lope, if not very critical himself, was the cause of some noteworthy criticism from others. From the lively controversy which arose over the character of his work, Señor Menéndez has extracted some documents, so exceedingly rare, that in one instance, at any rate, they consist of a unique copy of a reply to a libel, the original of which has perished altogether. This is the *Expostulatio Spongiæ* (1618) (the original and lost attack on Lope having been called *Spongia*), by a Julius Columbarius, who seems to have been the shadow of several gentlemen at once, the chief of them Lope's friend, Francesco López de Aguilar. Appended to this is a dissertation by Alfonso Sanchez, professor of Hebrew at Alcalá, in which the clear method and universally intelligible Latin of the schools are utilised to put part of the Romantic case, as it was seldom put before the end of the eighteenth century. "Nature," says Sanchez, "gives laws; she does not accept them." Spaniards are men, and, for the matter of that, Roman citizens as well. And times change: and, for all our worship of Cicero, he would be a dinner-bell[1] if he orated in the Theatre of Alcalá. Let poetry follow the requirements of its time. Another of these documents is the Apology for

[1] *Omnes dilaberentur*. Señor Menéndez (iii. 444) gives all the important parts, both in Latin and Spanish. R. de[l] Turia, *infra*, has been reprinted, but the marrow of him also will be found in the *Historia*, as well as much else: for instance, an interesting *Invectiva y Apología*, by Francesco de la Barreda in 1622, which is dignified by the words: "There was no greater dramatic-poetic written in the seventeenth century"—a large statement. But Barreda is certainly a staunch anti-Unitarian, and has well reached the important doctrine that "Art is merely a careful observation of classified [*graduados*] examples." The whole dispute, in which the more or less great names of the Argensolas, Artieda, Cristóbal de Mesa, and others, figure, together with the subsequent one on *culteranism*, will be found exhaustively treated in the tenth chapter of the *Historia*, and more summarily, but still usefully, in Ticknor. Since most of the text was written M. Morel-Fatio, in his *Défenseurs de la Comedia* (*v. sup.*, p. 343), has subjoined Turia to Tirso, and a certain Carlos Boyl to both, adding a notice of the Frenchman Ogier (*v. sup.*, pp. 256, 257), who is already familiar to readers of these pages. Boyl, one of the Valencian group above referred to, wrote in "romance" form rules of the *comedia nueva*.

Spanish drama, prefixed to a collection of plays by Valencian authors in 1616, and signed by Ricardo de[l] Turia, a *nom de guerre* not yet certainly identified, which is a special defence of Spanish comedy (*i.e.*, "drama") as such.

The fight over the Spanish drama.

In face of these remarkable utterances (which could be multiplied greatly, and the answers to them supplied) it may seem hard, if not altogether unjustifiable, to limit the importance of Spanish criticism, as has been done above. But it has to be observed that all this was a merely passing, and in great part a merely personal, literary dispute, which had no real effect. While the great Spanish dramatists lasted, the drama was popular, and men invented reasons to defend it. But they founded no school, either acceptedly orthodox or strong-reasoned in its heterodoxy: and, when the great age passed, instead of a sounder criticism, as in Dryden's case, founding itself upon the results, the formal and petrifying neo-classicism of Luzán froze all these reasonings up, just as Boileau had earlier frozen those of the Ogiers and the Saint-Sorlins in France. If we could validate that connection between Dryden himself and the Spanish critics, it would be something like a Missing Link: but we cannot.

Cervantes and Calderon.

The author of *Don Quixote* and the author of the *Vida es Sueño* contribute more irregularly to our matter. The chief critical documents furnished by the former are the long poem of the *Viaje del Parnaso*, and not so much the world-famous passage of the burning of the romances of chivalry in Don Quixote, as the whole problem and purpose of that immortal book itself.[1] The *Viaje*,[2] putting aside the debated question of its literary value, is rather a disappointing book, in its allegory of the poetic ship, with glosses for portholes, and tercets for sweeps, and its endless, but rather pointless, citation, generally flattering, but sometimes the reverse, of poets and poetic kinds. Both praise and blame

[1] Let it be remembered that the curious passage on which Pope dwells (*Ess. Crit.*, 267 *sq.*) is *not* Cervantic, but from the spurious and intrusive work of the mysterious Avellaneda.

[2] Enthusiastically, Englished, with much apparatus, by the late James Y. Gibson (London, 1883). It is closely modelled on the *Viaggio di Parnasso* of Cesare Caporali (1531-1601).

appear to be distributed very much on the principle of Miss Edgeworth's Frank, when he proposed to give the odd piece of tart to good Henry, who had mended his bat, or to kind Edward, who had lent him his ball. As for the burning question of the *libros de caballerías*, Cervantes was beyond all question right in preferring *Amadis* and *Palmerin*; but it must be a very matter-of-fact reader who does not see that in fact he loved them all, however he might laugh at them. Indeed, the scene itself (*D. Q.*, I. i. 6), though it ends in almost the whole library being left to the untender mercies of the housekeeper and the niece, makes constant exceptions both in favour of the romances themselves (including even such a dubious example as *Tirante the White*) and of other pieces in verse and prose from the *Diana* to the *Araucana*. And when the subject is taken up again much farther on (I. iv. 21) by the Canon of Toledo, his severe strictures on the Romances as they are change suddenly into a splendid panegyric of what they might be. This latter passage indeed shifts into one of the most remarkable of Cervantes' critical deliverances, the attack (in rougher language than Lope's own) on "irregular" plays, and the famous and very curious passage in which, immediately afterwards, the curate condemns the improbabilities of the chronicle-drama in words almost precisely similar to those which Sir Philip Sidney had used twenty years and more earlier, and adopts the whole "preceptist" view, with a special reference to Lope's own compromises and a demand for rigid licensing of plots and romances alike, according to the principles of taste and learning, of Tully (*secundum Donatum*) and "eloquence." One may entertain a passing doubt whether the chances of *Don Quixote* itself would have been altogether happy under such a censorship; and in this there is probably more following of the Italians[1] than deliberate critical preference. It, however, and other things (the famous contention that epics may be written in prose as well as in verse, though important from its actual illustration

[1] Or of their Spanish followers, such as Pinciano and Cascales. This opinion, formed independently from reading of *Don Quixote*, agrees with one of much more importance, that of Señor Menéndez himself. Nay, Mr Fitzmaurice Kelly (*op. cit.*, p. 237) roundly pronounces Cervantes "the least critical of men."

in the *Don* and its effect on Fielding, is in no sense original, and as an opinion hardly more than an echo of Scaliger) no doubt give Cervantes a certain status. But Calderon can hardly be said to give us anything except the odd inconsistency (to be paralleled, though in a different kind, with Lope's) of his alternate ridicule and patronage of the Gongorist style.

Gongorism, Culteranism, &c.

This last name introduces us to another controversy, which, though connected in the most intimate way with our subject, is a sort of appendix to it, and one of those appendices which, in some cases, one must ruthlessly cut short. The quarrels over Lope (whom, by the way, Góngora himself savagely attacked) were succeeded by the battle of *culteranismo*, again distinguished by that curious see-sawing which, as we have seen, marks the Spaniards on almost all critical points. Quevedo, for instance, and the above-mentioned Gonzales de Salas, behave like those capricious knights of Spenser's, who were always changing sides in the battle, and running tilt at the very champions by whose side they had lately charged. Quevedo in particular has a most extraordinary record in this matter. I do not think that, in my limited reading of Spanish, I have ever laughed more over anything than over his *Cuento de Cuentos*,[1] and his *Catechism to help to translate the jargonizing ladies*, where he addresses himself *Al caro, diáfano, transparente e mediano Lector*, gives instructions in the best manner of precious speech, and advises that a wife should call her husband *mi quotidio*, and he her *su sempiterna*, while neither will dream of speaking of a "gota *de agua*," but will, of course, denominate it a *podagra*. Yet Quevedo at other times did more than condescend to cultism, or culteranism, as it seems to be indifferently called.

Quevedo.

The great prose apostle of the cult, as Góngora was its poet, was Balthasar Gracián, who has not a little for us in his famous *Agudeza y arte de ingenio*,[2] the Bible of preciosity, with its motto, *En Nada Vulgar*, and its doctrine (II. 49), that *La semejança es origen de una immensidad*

Gracián.

[1] In his *Works*. Bibl. de Ribadeneyra.

[2] In his *Works*. 2 vols., Barcelona, 1748.

conceptuosa tirar principio de agudeza sin limite. His name gives an opportunity of illustrating the difficulty of treating *cosas de España.* I am not aware of any living English authorities on Spanish literature who can be placed above Mr David Hannay and Mr Fitzmaurice Kelly. Of these, the first says[1] that it was Gracián's "chosen function to be the critic, prophet, and populariser of Gongorism"; the second,[2] that "No man ever wrote . . . with more scorn of Gongorism and all its work." Who shall decide when doctors of this degree disagree to this extent? I am, so far as my very poor and imperfect knowledge of the texts goes, with Mr Hannay: but that is not to the point.

The limitations of Spanish criticism.

What, I think, is to the point, and what I may say with some general knowledge of criticism, if with little particular knowledge of Spanish, is that the very nature of the subject invites, excuses, necessitates such differences. The Spaniards, if I may be pardoned a rough and ugly metaphor, never "digested themselves," never either kept creation and criticism separate, or waited for the one till the other had ceased. *Naturaleza* and *Agudeza* jostle each other constantly in them, with a result of truceless war. One may even wonder whether *cultismo, culteranismo, conceptismo,*[3] coming as they did after the great period of natural freedom, in Lope, and Tirso, and Cervantes at his best, did not do far more than the harm that the much-abused "Metaphysicals" did in English. The practice of Góngora and Gracián, even of Calderon, not seldom belied the arguments of Tirso and of the shadowy Turia and Sanchez. When a Luzán comes in such cases it is too fatally easy for him to say, "Well! whatever the ancients did, they did not do *this!* There is at any rate no *jerigonza* in Aristotle or in Horace!" And the Spaniards had no Milton, no Shakespeare to carry them through, as ours carried us through the worst times. Their Cervantes in his great work was of an "off" kind, as yet not fully recognised;

[1] *Later Renaissance*, p. 172.

[2] *Hist. Spanish Lit.*, p. 340.

[3] I am very well aware that *culteranismo* and *conceptismo* are perhaps not identical, and have been asserted to be quite different. But both alike belong to the "better-bread-than-is-made-of-wheat" division of writing.

their Lope was too fluent, facile, voluminous, unconvincing; their Calderon, with all his marvellous poetical and specially lyrical power, too unequal and perhaps too rhetorical.

Above all, they had the misfortune to have no critic of real authority. The *Arte Nuevo* is partly clever enough "technical education," partly bookwork, partly ignoble or inartistic compromise: and if we compare Tasso and Lope, at no such great distance of time, we can only be struck by the enormous advantage of the Italian in serious critical weight. The others, the Pincianos, the Gonzales de Salas, and the rest, were persons, if not exactly of no mark or likelihood, at any rate of no commanding and authoritative importance, like Ben Jonson and Dryden in England, like Boileau in France. Even such comparatively slight examination of the actual texts as I have been able to give has shown me that many most interesting and independently striking *aperçus*, passages, phrases may be taken from the Spanish critics. But I cannot say that, even after duly perusing and perpending the admirably competent and loving examination of Señor Menéndez, I have been able to form any high opinion of Spanish seventeenth-century criticism as a whole.

CHAPTER III.

GERMAN AND DUTCH CRITICISM.

THE HINDMOST OF ALL — ORIGINS — STURM — FABRICIUS — VERSION A.— VERSION B.—JAC. PONTANUS—HEINSIUS: THE 'DE TRAGŒDIÆ CONSTITUTIONE'—VOSS—HIS 'RHETORIC'—HIS 'POETICS'—OPITZ—THE 'BUCH DER DEUTSCHEN POETEREI.'

The hindmost of all.

IT is not necessary to add much to what has been said in the first chapter of the last Book on the subject of Erasmus, in order to indicate the reasons why the growth of criticism in Germany, High and Low,[1] was far more tardy, and for a long time far scantier, than even in England; and why, when it came, it displayed a one-eyed character which is not visible in any other of the great European countries.[2] Want of unity, religious and political troubles, Grobianism and its opposite or companion Pedantry—all had to do with this; but the principal hindrance was the non-existence of any considerable German vernacular literature, and the consequent inveteracy of the habit of writing in Latin. So long as this lasted the Germans and Dutch might be and were commentators, scholars, grammarians—but they could hardly be critics, because they still lacked the comparative stimulus. And it is not a little noteworthy that the earlier development of Criticism in the

[1] I do not know any general-special books on the subject of this chapter, except those of Blankenburg, and Gayley and Scott, *cit. sup.*

[2] Of course Olmucensis (*v. supra*, p. 27) and Cornelius Agrippa (p. 28) in strictness belong to the subject, as does Erasmus himself. But the last is too cosmopolitan, and the two first too unimportant, to make the abstraction of them from this place a great wrong to the *Teutsche Nation*. Ulrich von Hutten wrote on versification, but not importantly.

Low Countries as compared with Germany, during our present period, at least coincided with a greater development of Dutch vernacular literature, though this is a matter which lies out of our direct route.

Origins.

There may easily be differences of opinion as to the persons, not mere Humanists, who shall be selected as representing the beginning of German criticism in modern times, in so far at least as the section of Poetics is concerned. The choice may lie between the famous Johann Sturm, who touches on literary matters in his letters, who wrote on Rhetoric, and whose pupil, late in his life, drew up a commentary on the Epistle to the Pisos in 1576; Georgius Fabricius, of Chemnitz, the first form of whose *De Re Poetica* appeared in 1565; and Jacobus Pontanus, whose real name was Spanmüller, whose book on the subject was published thirty years later, but who, as he was then a man of over fifty, and had long been a professor, had probably dealt with the subject, if only in lectures, much earlier.[1]

Sturm.

Sturm's interests were more in pædagogy than in poetry, and he does not rank high as a critic: though there is no doubt that he helped to spread devotion to books. It is not in his favour that, in the teeth of both external and internal evidence, he fights[2] for the name *De Arte Poetica*, on the special ground that the work of Horace is an *Ars Perfecta* (which, put its merits as high as you please, it most certainly is *not*), and that it has all the six parts of poetry—fable, character, *dianoia*, *lexis*, *melopœia*, and "sight." For the rest he has few general remarks, and is almost wholly commentatorial. His Rhetorical writing yields little really critical: nor in his *Letters* have I yet found half so much criticism as is extant in that single letter of Ascham to him, which has been noticed above.[3]

The other two were both men of very wide influence as

[1] The *Disputationes de Tragœdia* of Schosser (1559) are earlier than any of these; but they seem to be pure commentary on Aristotle. I have not been able to see them.

[2] *Commentarii in Art. Poet. Horat.* (Strasburg, 1576). The compiler was Johann Lobart. Sturm's Rhetorical works are rather numerous, and range from the *De amissa dicendi ratione* (ibid., 1538) onwards.

[3] P. 155.

teachers of Poetics: and both underwent the process—complimentary but disfiguring, and specially usual in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—of having their work watered out, or boiled down, by others. I do not know, and I have not considered it *tanti* to spend much time or labour in the attempt to discover, the exact process by which the small four books of the first edition of Fabricius' *De Re Poetica*[1] became the fat volume of seven, which presents itself under the same title thirty years later.[2] It seemed better to give this time and labour to the reading of the books themselves.

Fabricius.

Version A (as we may call that of 1565) is an early example of the kind of *gradus* which was particularly popular among the northern nations, though, as we have seen from the work of Mazzone da Miglionico,[3] it was by no means unknown in Italy. In his first book Fabricius discusses quantity, metre, and diction in general, with plentiful examples. Book II. is an elaborate table of locutions from the Latin poets, listed under heads as thus:—

Version A.

Amor tangit.	Matrimonium promittere.
" versat.	" " inire.
" torquet.	" " fallere.
" dat vulnus.	" " odisse.
" mordet.	
" torret.	

Book III. provides the dull-witted versifier with store of *clichés* of the same kind, but a little more elaborate; there being, for instance, dozens of phrases for embracing. And IV. is a sort of common place-book of short copies of verses on everything in Heaven and Earth.

Version B (which is dated long after Fabricius' death in 1571) is not only much enlarged but differently arranged. Book I. deals as before with Quantity and Feet; Book II. with the subject of A, Book III.; and the rest follow the same schemes,—III. B with tags on Ages, Seasons, Heavenly Bodies, &c.; IV. with epithets suitable to

Version B.

[1] *De Re Poetica*, Lib. iv. (Antwerp, 1565).

[2] Ibid., Lib. vii. (Leipsic, 1595).

[3] *V. sup.*, p. 107.

proper names; V. with ditto to common; VI. with a *pot-pourri* of poetical faults and beauties, &c.; while VII. gives a sort of appendix on prosody and diction generally.

There is no need to say much on the inevitable critical result, the obvious critical value or valuelessness, of this. There is in A a reference to Scaliger's *Poetic*, which had appeared a little before. As a matter of fact Scaliger and Fabricius between them provided the average late sixteenth-century man—sometimes even when he was a professed critic or poet, constantly when he was merely a person of ordinary culture—with a sort of joint poetical Thesaurus, — Scaliger doing the historical, critical, and (of its kind) philosophical business for him, and Fabricius keeping a general marine-store of materials, with precepts for their use.

The *Institutiones Poeticæ* of Spanmüller [Pontanus] appeared first in 1594. Its author is quoted, among other prophets of criticism, by the Spaniard Juan de La Cueva a dozen years later, and, independently of its original form, the book acquired, early in the seventeenth century, a large currency by being arranged (*concinnata*) in the *Sacrarum Profanarumque Phraseum Thesaurus* of J. Buehler,[1] where it serves as theoretic handbook to another Gradus. Indeed Pontanus' own work has all the characteristics of a decoction or abstract of Scaliger himself. And once more the same reflection applies. It is impossible not to see how powerful and (beyond mere school-work, in which they were no doubt invaluable[2]) how maleficent must have been the influence of such works on the critical temper of the generations influenced by them. La Bruyère's *Tout est dit*—an ironical fling in its author's mouth partly, no doubt, though perhaps not quite so even there—tended to become matter of breviary. Everything had been said and done; all the Kinds found out; all

Jac. Pontanus.

[1] *S. l.* 1633, and continually reprinted.

[2] Let me not be supposed for one moment to depreciate Latin verse-making. I hardly know (speaking from actual experience as a schoolmaster) a single study which is better for boys; and the intelligent use of the gradus is a better discipline in observation, critical selection, and method, than smatterings of a hundred so-called "sciences." But there is a time to put away childish things as well as a time to use them.

the phrases set down; all the poetry raised from shaft and vein and seam. You simply rearranged it like a child's house of wooden bricks, according to patterns provided on the lid. The "Causes of Corrupted Arts" into which Vives inquired, "The Lost System of Speaking" which Sturm deplored, were all to be found, and found sufficiently, in the Ancients.

The solid qualities of the German race have not commonly distinguished themselves in pure criticism, and to this day Lessing and Goethe are rather captains without companies, and with at best a staff of Schlegels, and suchlike, for lieutenants and ancients. Germans were, however, to do something better, in this century of erudition, than the mere preparation of fourth-form handbooks. Daniel Heinsius and Gerard Voss may be regarded with some reason as the Jachin and the Boaz of the temple of seventeenth-century Poetics. *The De Tragœdiæ Constitutione* of the first, which appeared at Leyden in 1611,[1] is the succinctest and best argued statement of the neo- and to a great extent pseudo-Aristotelian view of Drama. The new *Institutes of Oratory*,[2] and the much later *Poetical Institutes*[3] of the second, construct, with a great deal of learning and a very considerable amount of good sense, an entire neo-classical Rhetoric and Poetic. To both we must give some attention.

Heinsius. The De Tragœdiæ Constitutione.

The *De Tragœdiæ Constitutione* is beyond all doubt a very remarkable book. It is quite short; only some 250 very small pages of very large print, so that there are scarcely more than a hundred words in a page. But Heinsius writes as one having authority; and we can read but little of him before it becomes perfectly clear why that authority was accepted, for the rest of the century at least, with more docility and less cavil than that of almost any other critic. He takes the *Poetics*—as many,

[1] The copy of this which belongs to the University of Edinburgh has the additional interest of having belonged to, and of having been given by, Drummond of Hawthornden, and so of having been, not improbably, in the hands of Ben Jonson.

[2] *Commentariorum Rhetoricorum sive Oratoriarum Institutionum Libri Sex*, 8vo, Dordrecht, 1609. But this was greatly enlarged in the 4to of Leyden, 1643, which I use.

[3] *De Artis Poeticæ Natura ac Constitutione*, 4to, Amsterdam, 1647.

indeed most men for more than half a century, had taken them—for gospel. But he neither translates them on the one hand, nor wanders in the wilderness of scrappy and desultory commentary on the other. Not merely does he confine himself to that part of the book which concerns his actual subject, but he renders this part in a fashion which may best be described as a very rare, and very masterly, kind of lecturing. He neither slavishly keeps nor prudishly avoids the actual words of his author; his paraphrases are brief but lucid; he adds to Aristotle what he thinks necessary [1] in the way of illustrations from the Greek tragedians, citation from Horace, examples (by no means always laudatory) from Seneca, and the like; but in such a fashion as never to overload, or water down, the milk of the Aristotelian word. That he always gives that milk quite "sincere" we cannot say; he emphasises the "single revolution of the sun" more than he has any right to do, though he does not do the same for the still more pestilent and apocryphal Unity of Place. He may sometimes, or often in the disputable places (as of "purgation" and so forth), miss the full meaning of Aristotle according to the view of some judges, or impute a wrong one according to others. But nobody, let it be repeated, can read him impartially without seeing that he has soaked himself with the spirit of his author, has equipped himself pretty thoroughly with the literature of his subject, and, as a result, is speaking, as we said, with authority. There is no clearer or more workmanlike exposition of the neo-classic, and not too *neo*-classic, dramatic ideal than his.

Heinsius, like his successor Hédelin in France, and like Hédelin's successors Rymer and Dennis in England, was rash enough to forget that though a critic is (thank Heaven!) not bound to write good poetry, he is bound not to publish bad. And he ventured on a tragedy, *Herodes Infanticida*, and other things which did not meet much quar-

Voss.

[1] He has no room for much historical illustration, but what he says is generally sound, though it is odd that in mentioning the *Christus Patiens* (which, of course, he attributes to Gregory Nazianzen) he should not have noticed its *cento* character, and though his remarks on Muretus and Buchanan smack a little of the rival author of *Herodes Infanticida*.

ter even from those who agreed with him in critical principles. Voss was wiser, and confined himself to the pure erudition and comment of which the two books referred to above are far from being the worst examples. Indeed his unboastful scholarship, his immense reading, and his untiring industry would seem to have fitted him quite exceptionally for the duty; and he has actually given us in these two books, or rather collections of books, the completest *Rhetoric* and *Poetic* of modern, if not of any, times. Only two things more were needed to put these books in a place even more unique; but Nature refused the one to Voss personally, and the other was a thing almost unreasonable to require from a Dutch savant of the seventeenth century. The first was positive critical genius; and the second was an impartial appreciation of ancient and modern literature.

His Rhetoric.

The *Rhetoric*, which the author put out in its first form in 1606, revising and enlarging it for at least thirty years, till it forms a quarto of a thousand closely printed pages, has some seventy more of minute index, but lacks the Table of Contents, or displayed syllabus of section headings, for which we have so often had to be thankful in Italian work. Voss evidently had the practice of the Roman Law constantly before him, and he thus follows the method of the Latin treatises in a way which makes it for the most part superfluous for us to follow *him*, though he has plenty of modern instances and applications. From the Fourth Book onwards, however, he deals with Elocution and Style, chiefly of course by the way of Figures, yet, according to his lights, in the most careful and exhaustive fashion. But what is at once noteworthy and rather tell-tale is his unqualified admiration for the Scaligers, — father and son. "That divine man," "that man, *ad unguem factus*," that "emperor of the literary world," that "prince of the senate of criticism"; without some phrase of this kind he seems unable to name them. And in fact the whole book is rather a huge commentatorial digest of what they and others, from Aristotle downwards, have said than anything more.

The *Poetical Institutions* are somewhat more original, and

His Poetics.

they had much greater influence. The book consists really of three separate works, a brief *De Arte Poetica* of less than ninety pages, of which Grotius, in a commendatory epigram prefixed to some editions, says—

"non magnus dat tibi cuncta liber";

of the *Institutiones* proper in about four hundred; and of a *De Imitatione* which is rather shorter than the *Ars*. The first, as reason and its title both import, is a purely general tractate, which, after pointing out that Poetry has much in common with Oratory, and that therefore much which concerns it has been said in the earlier book, discusses all the old generalities about the origin, nature, moral character, and so forth, of poetry, with expositions of most of the *cruces* and technical catchwords from ψιλὸς λόγος down to *furor poeticus*. Voss is here also very generally Scaligerian; he adheres to the "natural" origin of poetry, love-songs, cradle-songs, &c., as against the religious and the deliberately "imitative"; gives very wide scope of subject to the poet, and defends him handsomely against his enemies and detractors from Plato downwards, but is properly indignant with naughty poets.[1]

The *Institutions* deal more directly with the question of Poetic Art, and proceed by a series of section-headings in the form of Propositions, which are then explained, commented, and defended. The first of the Three Books deals with the matter common to all kinds of poetry; the Second with the Drama; the Third with the Epic and the minor Kinds. All this is old stuff rehandled. There is somewhat more originality in the *De Imitatione*, which does not exactly correspond to any of the older books, or parts of books, on that subject. Voss generally supposes the question, "How is the poet to set about his work?" "How is he to apply all these rules that we have given him?" and before very long we see that he is really thinking of the wrong Imitation no less than Vida was. He

[1] Our whole history has shown us the obsession of the *pius poeta*, the *vir bonus*; but I think the uncompromising submission to it of the later seventeenth and eighteenth century is as much due to the influence of Voss as to that of any single mediate person.

devotes himself (no doubt under the happier inspiration of Quintilian) to discussing *how* we are to imitate, how to read. But he very soon slips into the inquiry, practical indeed but a little undignified, "How are we to escape plagiarism?" to which one is tempted to reply, "By not imitating in this sense at all." That is not his opinion. He thinks, if we may vary a well-known proverb, that the safe way is to take all your eggs out of one basket. But you are never to imitate bad words and thoughts; you must plan your work carefully beforehand, correct carefully, invite criticism, but distinguish between what is good and what is not. It is all very just in this way; but that way has led us far from *furor poeticus*. We feel at the end of Voss's laborious and erudite book that we are indeed in the century of the *Gradus*. And here, as in his other volume, we also feel that he has, for good or for evil, caught up and uttered the gospel of Neo-Classicism.

So far we have dealt only with Latin authors. The work of Heinsius is mentioned, both in the text by the author, and by the introducer, Augustinus Iskra, of the *Buch von der Deutschen Poeterei*[1] of Martin Opitz. This interesting and agreeable little book, though not exactly (as it has sometimes been incorrectly called) the first[2] piece of German poetic in the vernacular, is entitled, with the usual reserves, to the place of origin in *modern* German Poetics. It cannot be called prolix, for it only occupies sixty pages in the recent reprint; but it is equally modest and business-like, and helps to redeem from the utter absurdity of most of such appellations (though it still remains absurd) the title of German Dryden

Opitz.

[1] Printed at Brieg and published at Breslau in 1624; reprinted as the first number of Niemeyer's *Neudrucke des xvi^ten^ und xvii^ten^ Jahrhunderts*, at Halle in 1886. The title of *Prosodia Germanica*, which the later editions bore, does not seem to be the author's own.

[2] For instance, the very interesting *Grundlicher Bericht des Deutschen Meistergesangs* of Adam Puschmann, edited by Herr Jonas for the same collection as No. 73 (Halle, 1888), is more than half a century older than Opitz's book, having appeared at Görlitz in 1571. But Puschmann, a pupil of Hans Sachs himself, and active in the Masterschool, is only looking back on that school, the rules and regulations of which he lays down in the most approved fashion. "The face" of Opitz "meets the morning's breath."

which somebody or other has given to Opitz. Augustine Iskra does not exaggerate when he says—

> "Altius scandes patria canendo
> Barbyto, quam si Latium peritæ
> Atticæ jungas, Syriæque Peithus
> Noveris artem."

And it is the peculiar glory of the Silesian poet that he not only sang himself on the lyre of his country, but did his best to enable others to do so. The spirit of genuine patriotism breathes in his dedication of the booklet to the magistrates of his native town, Buntzlau; and that of a modest scholarship (an adjective and substantive which make such an agreeable couple that it is pity they should live so much apart) in the opening of the book itself. He has not the least idea, he says, that you can make a poet by rules and laws; nor has he any intention of doing over again the work which Aristotle, Horace, Vida, and Scaliger have done. But he arrays himself (to speak ecclesiastically) in a "decent tippet" of the old stuff about Linus and Orpheus, with the Strabo passage all complete, and a train of citations as to the nobility of the poet's office and the like. He comes in his fourth chapter to business. He actually quotes Walther von der Vogelweide; and I do not think that he can be fairly charged with that ὕβρις towards the ancient poetry of his country which too frequently marks others in other countries. But he is evidently set on the work of Reform—of substituting "smoothness of numbers" for the "wild sweetness" of the folk-song. Wherein no doubt he was wrong. Not that way did the counsels of perfection lie for the Higher Dutch; and they have always had to come back to the woodnotes and the wood-Muses to find poetic luck. But Opitz was entitled—was in his day almost bound—to think differently. The interesting thing—much more interesting to us than the details to which it led him, such as the patronage of the Alexandrine, the alternation of masculine and feminine rhymes, &c. —is the particular source to which he turned for inspiration and guidance. He knew, as has been said, the Italian critics, at least those in Latin, and he probably knew the Italian poets

The Buch der Deutschen Poeterei.

(he cites Petrarch). But it is to France, and specially to Ronsard, that he fondly turns. Now it need hardly be said that in 1624 the influence of the Pléiade in its own country, though not quite dead, was moribund; the correctness of Malherbe, on the one hand, was doing its best deliberately to throttle it, and the Italianated and Spaniolated extravagances which were fashionable were choking it in another way. This is no doubt not the only instance of a literary influence which is dead or dying in its own country showing full vitality in another, but it is one of the most remarkable. For, beyond question, the French influence—in successive forms, but still French—reigned in Germany for some hundred and fifty years; and it was Opitz who first brought it to bear.

His details, as has been said, are less interesting: yet they do not lack interest. He begins by stickling for pure High German: and certainly no one who, for his sins, has been condemned to read much of late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century German—one of the ugliest and most mongrel speeches in history, and quite astounding after the musical sweetness of the best *Mittelhochdeutsch*—will owe him a grudge for this. He protests against the mingle-mangle of foreign words which was flooding the language, and even against the famous *-iren* by which, to the present day to some extent, Germans give a sort of spurious naturalisation to such foreigners. He would have limits set (though he does not forbid it altogether) to that odd custom of declining classical names in German speech, which is also maintained to some extent, but which sometimes made a mere Macaronic of sixteenth-century German. On the other hand, it is curious to find him urging on Germans, who by right were, and by practice long have been, among the busiest and most successful of word-compounders, the *sonderliche anmuthigkeit* of compounds: and actually quoting the French as, next the Greeks, the masters of such things.[1] Of course the historical student, even if citations from Ronsard were not on the same page, would know at once whence this comes. Still, there still remains the oddity of alleging the undoubtedly awkward

[1] *Buch der Poet.*, ed. cit., p. 29.

and exotic-sounding *chasse-nue*, *ébranle-rocher*, and *irrite-mer* as warrants and patterns for words like *wolkentreiber*, *felsenstürmer*, and *meeraufreitzer*, which simply seem to us natural-born, and to require no warranty but their own sound and appearance.

But Opitz (of whom if any critic speaks disrespectfully, I fear that it argues him uncritical) wrote not merely on the eve, but in the actual stormy morning, of the Thirty Years' War: and Germany had something else to do for a long time besides listening to him. When matters settled down again, the advice to attend to the French was rather unfortunately "carried over" to a state of things in which French influence was still less the influence for Germany. But this imitation, whether right or wrong, found no important critical expression, and it would be losing labour and space to devote either to German criticism in the last half of the seventeenth century.

It is more remarkable that the real activity and accomplishment of Dutch during the early part of the century did not lead to some development of vernacular criticism. But to the best of my information[1] it did not. The Dutch and the Germans, however, of course still continued to write in Latin, to edit, to comment, to carry on that division of critical work which, according to the laying out of our subject, lies, except at particular seasons and for special ends, beyond the scope of this book. Moreover, both Holland and some of the German Free-towns, but especially the former country, became the adopted, as they were almost the natural, homes of those beginners of judicial criticism, who have been noticed in part at the conclusion of the French chapter of this Book. Bayle's *Nouvelles de la République de Lettres* were Hollandish by domicile, as was the *Bibliothèque Universelle* of Le Clerc, while at Leipsic the *Acta*

[1] I must here repeat, with additional emphasis, the caution and apology which I put in as to Spanish. I do not know anything of *this* language. I have been content to apply to Low Dutch the precept of a great High Dutchman, *Entbehren sollst du.* But for our purpose I believe it will be generally admitted that the renunciation is not fatal, important Dutch critics having, almost to a man, written in Latin.

Eruditorum maintained the same principle of critical annals for nearly a century. Bayle, as has been said before, was too much of a partisan, and perhaps of a wit, for anything of his to have a judicial, however much in some senses of the word it might have a critical, character: but the less mercurial talents of Jean Le Clerc, which have been characterised under the head of the *Ana* (v. *sup.*, p. 276), were very well suited to the conduct of a critical record.

CHAPTER IV.

DRYDEN AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

DEAD WATER IN ENGLISH CRITICISM—MILTON—COWLEY—THE PREFATORY MATTER OF 'GONDIBERT'—THE "HEROIC POEM"—DAVENANT'S 'EXAMEN'—HOBBES'S ANSWER—DRYDEN—HIS ADVANTAGES—THE EARLY PREFACES—THE 'ESSAY OF DRAMATIC POESY'—ITS SETTING AND OVERTURE—CRITES FOR THE ANCIENTS—EUGENIUS FOR THE "LAST AGE"—LISIDEIUS FOR THE FRENCH—DRYDEN FOR ENGLAND AND LIBERTY—'CODA' ON RHYMED PLAYS, AND CONCLUSION—CONSPICUOUS MERITS OF THE PIECE—THE MIDDLE PREFACES—THE 'ESSAY ON SATIRE' AND THE 'DEDICATION OF THE ÆNEIS'—THE PARALLEL OF POETRY AND PAINTING—THE 'PREFACE TO THE FABLES'—DRYDEN'S GENERAL CRITICAL POSITION—HIS SPECIAL CRITICAL METHOD—DRYDEN AND BOILEAU—RYMER—THE 'PREFACE TO RAPIN'—THE 'TRAGEDIES OF THE LAST AGE'—THE 'SHORT VIEW OF TRAGEDY'—THE RULE OF TOM THE SECOND—SPRAT—EDWARD PHILLIPS—HIS 'THEATRUM POETARUM'—WINSTANLEY'S 'LIVES'—LANGBAINE'S 'DRAMATIC POETS'—TEMPLE—BENTLEY—COLLIER'S 'SHORT VIEW'—SIR T. P. BLOUNT—PERIODICALS: THE 'ATHENIAN MERCURY,' ETC.

THE middle third, if not the whole first half, of the seventeenth century in England was too much occupied with civil and religious broils to devote attention to such a subject as literary criticism. Between the probable date of Jonson's *Timber* (1625-37) and the certain one of Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (1668) we have practically nothing substantive save the interesting prefatory matter to *Gondibert* (1650). Milton, the greatest man of letters wholly of the time, must indeed during this time have conceived, or at least matured, that cross-grained prejudice against rhyme, which is more surprising in him than even in Cam-

Dead water in English Criticism.

Milton.

pion, and which was itself even more open to Daniel's strictures. For not only is Milton himself in his own practice a greater and more triumphant vindicator of rhyme than Campion, but Daniel's strongest and soundest argument, "Why condemn this thing in order to establish that?" applies far more strongly to blank verse than to Campion's artificial metres. Custom and Nature, those greater Cæsars to whom Daniel so triumphantly appealed, had already settled it, as they were to confirm it later, that rhymed and unrhymed verse, each obeying the natural evolution of English prosody, should be the twin horses to draw its car. But Milton never developed his antipathy to rhyme (which in all probability arose, mainly if not merely, from the fact that nearly all the most exquisite rhymers of his time, except himself, were Cavaliers) in any critical fashion, contenting himself with occasional flings and *obiter dicta*.[1]

Cowley.

Another poet of the time, Cowley, ought to have given us criticism of real importance. He had the paramount, if not exclusive, literary interests which are necessary to a great critic; he had the knowledge; and he was perhaps the first man in England to possess the best kind of critical style—lighter than Daniel's, and less pregnant, involved, and scholastic than Jonson's—the style of well-bred

[1] The chief critical *loci* in Milton are all among the best known passages of his work. They are the peremptory anathema on rhyme in the prose note added to *Paradise Lost*, in what Professor Masson has settled to be the "Fifth Form of the First Edition"; the short Defence of Tragedy, wholly on Italian principles but adapted to Puritan understandings, prefixed to *Samson Agonistes*; the first description of his own studies in *The Reason of Church Government*; the more elaborate return upon that subject—a singular mixture of exquisite phrasing and literary appreciation with insolent abuse—in the *Apology for Smectymnuus* (which is not, as some have thought, the same thing as *The* [Platonic] *Apology*) and divers clauses in the *Tractate of Education*, especially the reference to "Castelvetro, Tasso, and Mazzoni," whom he credits with "sublime art," and puts on a level with Aristotle and Horace. We might add a few casual girds, such as that at the supposed cacophony of Hall's "Teach each" in the *Apology for Smectymnuus*, which has been compared to Malherbe's vellications of Desportes (*cf. sup.*, p. 245). A complete critical treatise from him (if only he could have been prevailed upon to write in a good temper) would have been of supreme interest: it is not so certain that it would have been of supreme value, even if he had been in that temper.

conversational argument.[1] But he was a little bitten with the scientific as opposed to the literary mania, and, in his own person, he was perhaps too much of a Janus as regards literary tastes to be able to give—or indeed to take—a clear and single view. There were, as in Lope, two poets in Cowley, and each of these was wont to get in the way of the other. The one was a "metaphysical" of the high flight, who at least would, if he could, have been as intensely fantastic as Donne, and as gracefully fantastic as Suckling. The other was a classical, "sensible," couplet-poet, who was working out Ben Jonson's theories with even less admixture of Romanticism than that which tinged Ben Jonson's practice. The entanglement of these was sufficiently detrimental to his poetry; but it would have been absolutely fatal to his criticism, which must either have perpetually contradicted itself or else have wandered in a maze, perplexing as perplexed.

The Prefatory matter of Gondibert.

It is with Davenant's Preface to *Gondibert*, in the form of a Letter to Hobbes, and with Hobbes's answer to it,[2] that England strikes once more into the main path of European critical development. And it is of capital importance that, both the writers being exiled royalists, these documents were written at Paris in the year 1650. There was much interest there in English affairs, while, as we have seen, the habit of literary discussion

[1] He has practically given us nothing but a slight apology for sacred verse (common in his time and natural from the author of the *Davideis*); with a slighter seasoning of the also familiar defence of poetry from being mere "lying," in the Preface to the folio edition of his Poems; some still slighter remarks on Comedy in that to *Cutter of Coleman Street;* and hardly more than a glance at literary education in his *Proposition for the Advancement of Experimental Philosophy*. In this last we may feel a sort of gust of the same spirit which appears in his disciple Sprat's *History of the Royal Society* (*v. infra*).

[2] Both these will be found in Chalmers' *Poets*, vi. 349-372. Hobbes's *Answer* is also in Molesworth's ed. of the *Works*, iv. 443-458. It is there followed by a short literary letter to Edward Howard of the *British Princes*, the most egregious of Dryden's egregious leash of brothers-in-law. To these may be added the brief literary passage in the chapter of "Intellectual Virtues" in the First Part of *Leviathan* (ibid., iii. 58) and the "Brief" of the *Rhetoric* (referred to *supra*, vol. i. p. 40); ibid., vi. 416-510. I have a copy of the first edition of this, anonymous and undated, but assigned to 1655-57 by bibliographers. It does not contain the shorter *Art of Rhetoric*, which follows in Molesworth.

had, for more than a generation, become ingrained in Frenchmen. When Davenant set himself to write *Gondibert*, he was doing exactly what Chapelain and Desmarets and the rest were doing; and when he and his greater friend exchanged their epistles, they were doing exactly what all the French literary world had been doing, not merely, as is commonly thought, from the time of the *Cid* dispute, but from one much earlier. Taking all things together, it was natural that the subject should be the *Heroic Poem*, which had been a favourite of Italian and French critics for some seventy years and more, but had been little touched in England, though the conclusion of Ben's *Discoveries* shapes a course for it. Hints have been given before in this History that in the opinion of its writer the "Heroic Poem" had much in common with that entity which was long without a literary name, but which an admirable humourist has now enabled us to describe scientifically as a Boojum[1]—that is to say, it was not only something undiscoverable, but something which had a malign and, indeed, destructive influence on those who thought they had discovered it.

The "Heroic Poem."

The "Heroic Poem" was to be neither pure Romance nor pure Epic, but a sort of medley between the two. Or, rather, it was to be a thing of shreds and patches, strictly epic (or at least Virgilian-epical) in theory and rules, but borrowing from Romance whatever it could, as our Elizabethans would say, "convey cleanly" enough in the way of additional attractions. The shreds and patches, too, were not purely poetical: they were not taken simply from Homer and Virgil, nor even from Horace, Virgil, Lucan, Statius, and the rest down to that Musæus whom Scaliger thought so superior to the Chian. A great deal of ancient critical dictum was brought in, and as Aristotle and Horace had said less about Epic than about Drama, they were to be supplemented from others, especially by that treacherous and somewhat obscure passage of Petronius which has been commented on in its place. In fact the whole of this Heroic Poem matter is a sort of satire on criticism by

[1] This Boojum, I fear, will disturb some of my friends. But I put him under the protection of the Powder of Pimperlimpimp, and of the Equinoctials of Queubus.

Kinds, in its attempt—and failure—to discover a kind. If the founders of the novel (who, indeed, in some notable cases were by no means free from the obsession) had persisted in constructing it on the lines of the Heroic Poem, it would indeed have been all up with Fiction. To read Tasso (who, as we might expect, is not the least reasonable) and others, from Ronsard and Du Bellay down to Desmarets and Le Bossu (both of whom, let it be remembered, wrote some time after Davenant)—to find even Dryden a Martha of "machinery," and comforting himself with a bright new idea of getting the *deorum ministeria* out of the limited intelligences of angels, so that you might not know at once which side was going to win, as you do in the ordinary Christian Epic[1]—is curious. Nay, it is more—humorous, with that touch of "the pity of it" which humour nearly always has.

Davenant's Examen.

The ingenious knight, in explaining his performance and its principles to his friend the philosopher, takes a very high tone. Homer, Virgil, Lucan, and Statius are passed successively in review, and receive each his appropriate compliment, put with dignified reserves, especially in the two latter cases. Only two moderns are admitted—Tasso of the Italians —"for I will yield to their opinion who permit not Ariosto—no, not Du Bartas—in this eminent rank of the heroicks, rather than to make way by their admission for Dante, Marino, and others"[2]—and Spenser of our own men. But Tasso is roundly taken to task for his fairy-tale element, Spenser for his allegory and his archaism. And the faults of all from Homer downwards are charged against "the natural humour of imitation."[3]

[1] See the *Discourse on Satire*—Scott (in the edition revised by the present writer) (London, 1882-93), xiii. 24 *sq.*, or Ker (*ed. cit. post*), ii. 33 *sq.*

[2] I do not smile so much as some may over "no, not Du Bartas." But though oases are far from rare in what may seem, to those who know it not, this thirsty land of criticism, I hardly know a more delightful "diamond of the desert" than the refusal to admit somebody else lest you should have to admit Dante, and the subsequent "Dante, Marino, *and others*." When the eye is weary of italic print, or of a too closely packed quarto page, or of François Hédelin, Abbé d'Aubignac, in any type or *format*, it is pleasant half to shut it, and let the dream of these "others" wave before one. I see that they must have written in Italian; but other common measure, other link to bind them both to the *Commedia* and to the *Adone*, is yet to seek for me.

[3] Lest the last note should lead any one to think that I wish to make inept and ignoble game of Davenant, let me observe that he can write ad-

After a by no means despicable, but somewhat rhapsodical, digression on this—it is to be observed that Davenant uses "Imitation" in the frank modern sense—and an apology for it as "the dangerous fit of a hot writer," he gives reasons, partly no doubt drawn from Italian and French sources, why he has made his subject (1) Christian, (2) antique but not historical, (3) foreign, (4) courtly and martial, (5) displaying the distempers of love and ambition. Then he expounds in turn his arrangement of five books (to correspond to acts), with cantos to answer to scenes,[1] his arguments, his quatrain-stanza. He asserts that "the substance is wit," and discusses that matter at some length, and with a noteworthy hit at conceits, which reminds us that Davenant was *à cheval* between the First and the Second Caroline period. He indulges in not unpardonable loquacity about his poetic aspirations, with a fresh glance at the great poets of old, and brings in thereby, with some ingenuity but at too great length as a finale, the old prefatory matter of the *Arts Poetic* about the importance and dignity of poetry in the world, concluding exactly where most begin, with Plato and that "divine anger" of his which some have turned to the "unjust scandal of Poesie." And so a pleasant echo of Sir Philip blends agreeably with the more prosaic tone, and time, and temper of Sir William.

Hobbes's Answer.

Hobbes, as we should expect, is much briefer; and those bronze sentences of his (though he had not at this time quite brought them to their full ring and perfect circumscription) give no uncertain sound. He is not, he says, a poet (which is true), and when he assigns to *Gondibert* "various experience, ready memory, clear judgment, swift and well-governed fancy," it is obvious enough that all these might be there and yet poetry be absent. He divides the kinds of

mirable things, worthy a son, in double sense, of Oxford. Could anything be happier than this of Spenser: "His *noble and most artful hands*"? The mere selection of the epithets is good, the combination of them famously so.

[1] This attempt to get Epic as close as possible to Drama—to work all the kinds of Imitation back into one arch-kind—appears more or less fitfully in the whole Neo-Classic school. And we shall never quite understand the much discussed "Heroic Play," till we take it in conjunction with the "Heroic Poem."

poetry "swiftly" enough, and ranges himself with his customary decision against those who "take for poesy whatsoever is writ in verse," cutting out not merely didactic poetry, but sonnets, epigrams, and eclogues, and laying it down that "the subject of a poem is the manners of men." "They that give entrance to fictions writ in prose err not so much," but they err. And accordingly he begins the discussion of verse. He does not quarrel with Davenant, as Vida would have done, for deliberately eschewing Invocation; and rapidly comments on the plot, characters, description, &c., of the poem. On the head of diction he would not be Hobbes if he could or did spare a sneer at words of no sense, words "contunded by the schools," and so forth. And since he *is* Hobbes, there is piquancy in finding him at one with Walton in the objection to "strong lines." He is rather striking on a subject which has been much dwelt on of late; the blunting of poetic phrase by use. And when he says that he "never yet saw poem that had so much shape of art, health of morality, and vigour of beauty and expression" as *Gondibert*—when, in the odd timorousness he had caught from Bacon, he adds, that it is only the perishableness of the modern tongues which will prevent it from lasting as long as the *Æneid* or the *Iliad*—let us remember that, though criticism is one thing and compliment another, they sometimes live in a rather illicit *contubernium*. At any rate, there *is* criticism, and real criticism, in the two pieces; and they are about the first substantial documents of it in English of which as much can be said for many years.[1]

Thus, although two of these four were of the greatest of our writers, the third an interesting failure of greatness, and the fourth far from contemptible, they were in all cases prevented, by this or that disqualification, from doing much in criticism.

Dryden.

Dryden, on the contrary, started with every advantage, except those of a body of English criticism behind him, and of a thorough knowledge of the whole of English literature. He was a poet nearly, if not quite, of the first

[1] There is, of course, critical matter in Howell's *Letters*, and in a score or scores of other places; but it is of the kind that we must *now* neglect, or select from with the most jealous hand.

class: and though his poetry had a strong Romantic spirit in virtue of its perennial quality, it took the form and pressure of the time so thoroughly and so kindly that there was no internal conflict. Further, he had what by no means all poets of the first class have had, a strong, clear, common-sense judgment, and a very remarkable faculty of arguing the point. And, finally, if he had few predecessors in English, and perhaps did not know much of those few except of Jonson, he was fairly, if not exactly as a scholar, acquainted with the ancients, and he had profited, and was to profit, by the best doctrine of the moderns.

His advantages.

Moreover, from a certain not unimportant point of view, he occupies a position which is only shared in the history of criticism by Dante and (in some estimations, though not in all) by Goethe,—the position of the greatest man of letters in his own country, if not also in Europe, who is at the same time the greatest critic, and who is favoured by Fortune with a concentration of advantages as to time and circumstance. His critical excellence has indeed never been wholly overlooked, and, except by the unjuster partisanship of the early Romantic movement in England, generally admitted with cheerfulness.[1] The want, however, of that synoptic study of the subject, which it is the humble purpose of this book to facilitate, has too often prevented his full pre-eminence from being recognised. It may even be said that it is in criticism that Dryden best shows that original faculty which has often been denied him elsewhere. He borrows, indeed, as freely as everywhere: he copies, with a half ludicrous deference, the stock opinions of the critics and the criticasters in vogue; he gives us pages on pages of their pedantic trivialities instead of his own shrewd and racy judgments. But, despite of all this, there is in him (and with good luck we may perhaps not fail to disengage

[1] Of the great critical men of letters of 1800-1850 only Leigh Hunt — the least of them — was just to Dryden; even Hazlitt is inadequate on him. Among our *preceptistas* of the same or a little later date, Keble (*Præl.* v.) mildly perstringes Dryden's inconsistency ("*male sibi constat D.*"), but rather as poet than as critic. Garbett, his successor and opponent, a great admirer of Dryden's style, and one who expresses just regret at the want of common knowledge of it, is very severe (*Præl.* x.) on his want of philosophical profundity and sincerity. But the reverend Professor had found nearly as much fault on this score with Longinus.

it) a vein and style in "judging of Authours" which goes straight back to Longinus, if it is not even independent of that great ancestry.[1]

The Early Prefaces.

This vein is perceptible[2] even in the slight critical essays which precede the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, though of course it is much more evident in the *Essay* itself. In the preface to the *Rival Ladies* (written, not indeed when Dryden was a very young man, but when, except for *Juvenilia*, he had produced extremely little) we find his critical path clearly traced, and still more in the three years later Preface to *Annus Mirabilis*. The principles of this path-making are as follows: Dryden takes—without perhaps a very laborious study of them, but, as has been said already, with an almost touching docility in appearance—the current theories and verdicts of the French, Italian (and Spanish?) critics whom we should by this time have sufficiently surveyed. He does not—he never did to the date of the glorious Preface to the *Fables* itself—dispute the general doctrines of the sages from Aristotle downwards. But (and this is where the Longinian resemblance comes in) he never can help considering the individual works of literature almost without regard to these principles, and simply on the broad, the sound, the unshakable ground of the impression they make on him. Secondly (and this is where the resemblance to Dante comes in), he is perfectly well aware that questions of diction, metre, and the like are not mere catchpenny or claptrap afterthoughts, as ancient criticism was too apt to think them, but at the root of the pleasure which literature gives. Thirdly (and

[1] Dryden made no mistake about Longinus. He calls him, in the *Apology* prefixed to *The State of Innocence*, "the greatest critic among the Greeks after Aristotle," cites him often, and parades and uses a long passage of the Περὶ Ὕψους in the Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*. The references are conveniently collected in Mr Ker's index (*v. inf.*)

[2] Dryden's critical work, which until recently was accessible with ease only in Scott's elaborate edition of his works, or in Malone's less bulky, but still bulky and not excessively common, edition of the Prose, has recently been given, with quite admirable editorial matter, by Professor Ker (2 vols., Oxford, 1900). I wish he had included one or two more things, especially the *Heads of an answer to Rymer*; but it must be admitted that the authenticity of these, though I think not doubtful, is not absolutely certain, and the correct text still less so. See note on Rymer *infra*, and my edition of Scott, xv. 378 *sq.*, for text and history.

this is where, though Aristotle did not deny the fact, the whole criticism of antiquity, except that of Longinus, and most of that of modern times, swerves timorously from the truth), he knows that this delight, this transport, counts first as a criterion. Literature in general, poetry in particular, should, of course, instruct: but it *must* delight.[1]

The "blundering, half-witted people," as in one of his rare bursts of not absolutely cool contempt[2] he calls his own critics, who charged him with plagiarising from foreign authors, entirely missed these differences, which distinguish him from every foreign critic of his day, and of most days for long afterwards. He may quote—partly out of that genuine humility and generosity combined which make his literary character so agreeable; partly from an innocent parade of learning. But he never pays for what he borrows the slavish rent, or royalty, of surrendering his actual and private judgment.

In the Preface to the *Rival Ladies* the poet-critic takes (as indeed he afterwards himself fully acknowledged) a wrong line —the defence of what he calls "verse" (that is to say, rhymed heroic couplets, not blank verse) for play-writing. This was his mistress of the time; he rejoiced in her caresses, he wore her colours, he fought for her beauty—the enjoyment authorising the argument. But as he has nothing to say that has not been better said in the *Essay*, we may postpone the consideration of this. There is one of the slips of fact which can be readily excused to (and by) all but bad critics,—and which bad critics are chiefly bound to avoid, because accuracy of fact is their only title to existence—in his mention of "Queen" *Gorboduc* and his addition that the dialogue in that play is rhymed; there is an interesting sigh for an Academy (Dryden, let it be remembered,

[1] *Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poesy.* Scott, *ed. cit.*, xi. 295: Ker, i. 113.

[2] Preface to *Miscellanies*, ii.; Scott, *ed. cit.*, xii. 295; Ker, i. 263. I wish that Dryden were alive for many reasons: not least because he would certainly pay the debt that he owes to my friend Mr Ker *magnificentissime*. No one has vindicated him better against the half-witted blunderers. But I am not quite so much inclined as even Mr Ker is to father his critical *style* on Chapelain and La Mesnardière, Sarrasin and Scudéry, or on Corneille himself. It is not till Saint-Evremond, perhaps even till Fénelon, that I can find in French the indescribable *omne tulit punctum* as in him. And both are his inferiors.

was one of the earliest members of the Royal Society); and there is the well-known and very amiable, though rather dangerous, delusion that the excellence and dignity of rhyme were never known till Mr Waller taught it, and that John Denham's *Cooper's Hill* not only is, but ever will be, the exact standard of good writing. But he knows Sidney and he knows Scaliger, and he knows already that Shakespeare "had a larger soul of poesy than any of our nation." And a man who knows these three things in 1664 will go far.

The Preface to *Annus Mirabilis*[1] is again submissive in form, independent in spirit. Dryden obediently accepts the prescription for epic or "Heroic" poetry, and though he makes another slip of fact (or at least of term) by saying that Chapman's *Homer* is written in "Alexandrines or verses of six feet" instead of (as far as the *Iliad* is concerned) in the fourteener, he is beautifully scholastic on the differences between Virgil and Ovid, the Heroic and the Burlesque, "Wit Writing" and "Wit Written." But he does it with unconquerable originality, the utterance of his own impression, his own judgment, breaking through all this school-stuff at every moment; and also with a valuable (though still inadequate) account of "the Poet's imagination."[2]

Yet another point of interest is the avowed intention (carried out in the poem, to the disgust or at least distaste of Dr Johnson) of using technical terms. This, one of the neo-classic devices for attaining propriety, was, as we have seen, excogitated in Italy, and warmly championed by the Pléiade; but it had been by this time mostly abandoned, as it was later by Dryden himself.

[1] I have not thought it necessary to encumber the page with references in the case of the shorter Essays, where any one can discover the passages cited, whether he uses Scott, Malone, the originals, or Mr Ker's special collection, with no more labour than is good for him and deserved by them. In the case of the longer pieces the references will be given at least sufficiently often to make the locating of the others easy, without turning the lower part of the page into a kind of arithmetical table.

[2] As including Invention, Fancy, and Elocution, but in itself merely considered as synonymous with "Wit." It was probably from this that Addison (see below) started that Imagination theory of his which has been so much overrated.

The *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* is much better known than it was only a couple of decades ago,[1] and it is perhaps superfluous to say that it is a dialogue in form, and that the interlocutors are Dryden himself (Neander), his brother-in-law Sir Robert Howard (Crites), Sir Charles Sedley (Lisideius), and Lord Buckhurst (Eugenius). The two last, though at the time the wildest of scapegraces, were men of distinct poetic gift and varied literary faculty. And Howard, though no great poet, and possessing something of the prig, the coxcomb, and the pedant in his composition, was a man of some ability, of real learning of a kind, and of very distinct devotion to literature.

The Essay of Dramatic Poesy.

The *Essay* was first published in 1668, but had been written, according to Dryden's statement in his Preface to Lord Buckhurst, "in the country" (at his father-in-law Lord Berkshire's seat of Charlton near Malmesbury), when the author was driven out of London by the Great Plague three years before. He had, he says, altered some of his opinions; but it did not much matter in an Essay "where all I have said is problematical." The "Address to the Reader" promises a second part dealing with Epic and Lyric, which never appeared, and of which only the Epic part is represented by later works. This is a pity, for while we have treatises on Drama and Epic *ad nauseam*, their elder and lovelier sister has been, "poor girl! neglected." It begins with a picturesque setting, which represents the four interlocutors as having taken boat and shot the bridge, attracted by the reverberation of the great battle with the Dutch in the early part of June 1665, when Admiral Opdam's flag-ship was

Its setting and overture.

[1] When the present writer began his revision of Scott's *Dryden* in the year 1881 there were no separate editions of the *Essay* since the originals. There are now, of annotated issues of it, either by itself or with more or less of its author's related work, no less than five known to me,—those of Mr Thomas Arnold (Oxford, 1886), Mr Schenck (New York, 1898), Mr Low (London, n. d.), Mr Nichol Smith (Glasgow, 1900), and Professor Ker's. The study of English literature in schools and colleges has been much abused, very foolishly talked about by some of its advocates, and no doubt not always wisely directed. But it is at least something to be said for it that it has made such a masterpiece as this known to probably a hundred persons for every one who knew it twenty years ago.

blown up. Eugenius augurs victory from the gradual dying away of the noise; and Crites observes (in character) that he should like this victory better if he did not know how many bad verses he should have to read on it. Lisideius adds that he knows some poets who have got *epinikia* and funeral elegies all ready for either event, and the dialogue proceeds for some time in the same way of literary banter, especial set being made at two poets (one of whom is certainly Wild, while the other *may* be Flecknoe) with incidental sneers at Wither(s) and Cleveland. At last Crites brings it to something like the quarrel of Ancient *v.* Modern. Eugenius picks up the glove, but consents, at Crites' suggestion, to limit the discussion to dramatic poetry,[1] and so the "dependence" is settled.

Crites for the Ancients.

Eugenius thinks that though modern plays are better than Greek or Roman, yet those of "the last age" (1600-1660) are better than "ours." As for epic and lyric, the last age must yield. And all the quartette agree that "the sweetness of English verse was never understanded or practised" by our fathers, and that some writers yet living first taught us to mould our thoughts into easy and significant words, to retrench the superfluities of expression, and to make our rhyme so properly a part of the verse that it should never mislead the sense. Lisideius having (with the consent of the company, subject to a slight scholastic objection from Crites) defined or described a play as "A just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind," Crites takes up his brief for the ancients. His speech is a set one, extolling the classical conception of drama, and especially the modern-classical Unities,

[1] One of the very earliest evidences of the interest in dramatic criticism felt in England, immediately after the Restoration, must be Pepys' note that on September 1, 1660, when he was dining at the Bullhead, there "rose . . . a dispute between Mr Moore and Dr Clerke—the former affirming that it was essential to a tragedy to have the argument of it true, which the Doctor denied." The question, on the very English terms of another dinner and a bet, was to be settled by Pepys himself three days later. He does not tell us whether he read up for it; but on the 4th he decided for the Doctor (*Diary*, ed. Wheatley, i. 233).

but rather a panegyric than an argument, and particularly weak in this—that it takes no critical account of the modern drama at all. Except Ben Jonson, "the greatest man of the last age," not a single modern dramatic writer of any country is so much as named.

Eugenius for the "last age."

Eugenius, though his discourse is livelier, falls into something the same fault, or at least the counterpart of it. He rallies the ancients unmercifully, and has very good game of the stock plots and characters in Terence; but his commendation of the moderns has a disappointing generality, and he lays himself rather open to the good-humoured but forcible interruption of Crites that he and Eugenius are never likely to come to an agreement, because the one regards change as in itself an improvement, and the other does not.

Lisideius for the French.

Still, Lisideius gives a new turn to the discussion by asking Eugenius why he puts English plays above those of other nations, and whether we ought not to submit our stage to the exactness of our next neighbours. Eugenius in reply commits the further and especial defence of the English to Neander, and Lisideius begins his part as eulogist of the French. For some forty years, he says, we have not had leisure to be good poets. The French have: and, by Richelieu's patronage and Corneille's example, have raised their theatre till it now surpasses ours, and the rest of Europe. Who have kept the Unities so well? Who have avoided "that absurd thing," the English tragi-comedy, so completely? In tragedy they take well-known stories, and only manageable parts of them, while Shakespeare crams the business of thirty or forty years into two hours and a half. They make only one person prominent, they do as much as possible behind the scenes, keep dying off the stage altogether, and never end their plays with a conversion, or simple change of will. Nobody, with them, appears on the stage, unless he has some business there: and as for the beauty of their rhyme, why, that is "already partly received by us," and it will, no doubt, when we write better plays, "exceedingly beautify them."

To him, Neander—that is to say—Dryden himself.

There is a reminder (though the matter is quite different) of Daniel, and a comforting augury for English criticism, in the swift directness with which "the new critic" (as a Webbe of his own day might have called him) strikes at the heart of the question. The French are more regular, he grants, and our irregularities are, in some cases, justly taxed. But, nevertheless, he is of opinion that neither our faults nor their virtues are sufficient to place them above us. For Lisideius himself has defined a play as a lively imitation *of nature*. And these beauties of the French stage are beauties, not natural, but thoroughly artificial. Before Molière, where are the humours of French comedy, save, perhaps, in *Le Menteur* and a few others? Elsewhere they work in comedy only by the old way of quarrels and reconciliations, or by the conventions of Spanish intrigue-drama. "On which lines there is not above one play to be writ: they are too much alike to please often."

Dryden for England and Liberty.

Then, as to tragi-comedy. What is the harm of this? why should Lisideius "imagine the soul of man more heavy than his senses?" The eye can pass, and pass with relief, from an unpleasant to a pleasant object, in far less time than is required on the stage. He must have stronger arguments before he concludes that compassion and mirth destroy each other: and in the meantime he will hold that tragi-comedy is a more pleasant way than was known to the ancients, or any moderns who have eschewed it.

Next, and closely connected, as to single-plot *v.* plot+underplot. Why is the former to be preferred to the latter? Because it gives a greater advantage to the expression of passion? Dryden can only say that he thinks "their" verse the "coldest" he has ever read, and he supports this by a close and pleasant beating-up-the-quarters of *Cinna* and *Pompey*, "not so properly to be called plays as long discourses on reason of state"; of *Polyeucte*, "as solemn as the long stops on an organ," of their mighty tirades and *récits*. "Whereas in tragedy it is unnatural for any one either to speak or listen long, and in comedy quick repartee is the chiefest grace." Yet again "they" are praised for making only one person con-

siderable. Why? If variety is not mere confusion, is it not always pleasing?[1]

The question of narrative against represented action is treated with less boldness, and, therefore, with less success: but he comes to the sound, if not very improving, conclusion that, if we show too much action, the French show too little. He has an interesting rebuke, however, here to Ben Jonson, for reprehending "the incomparable Shakespeare."[2] And he rises again, and makes a capital point, by citing Corneille's own confession of the cramping effect of the Unities, enlarging whereon himself, he has an admirable exposure of the utterly unnatural conditions which observance of these Unities brings about. Then, after some remarks on prosody and the earlier use of rhyme in English—remarks partly true, partly vitiated by imperfect knowledge—he undertakes to produce plays as regular as theirs and with more variety, instancing *The Silent Woman*. Of this he is proceeding to a regular *examen* when Eugenius requests a character of the author: and Neander, after a little mannerly excuse, not only complies with this request, but prefixes similar characters of Shakespeare and Fletcher.

The first of these is universally, the second and third should be pretty well known. It must be sufficient to say here that nothing like even the worst of the three (that of Beaumont and Fletcher, which wants the adequacy and close grip of the other two) had previously been seen in English, and not many things in any other language, while to this day, with all faults, the character of Shakespeare is one of the *apices* of universal criticism. The characters are followed by the *examen*—also admirable and quite new in English, though with more pattern elsewhere. And he ends with a short peroration, the keynote of which is, "I ask no favour from the French." Lisideius is going to reply; but Crites interrupting, diverts the discussion to a particular point already glanced at—the use of rhyme in plays. He (sen-

Coda *on rhymed plays, and conclusion.*

[1] Here, to glance at the matter of Dryden and the Spaniards (*v. sup.*, p. 332, and *inf.*, on Spence), is a *possible* reminiscence of Lope's *Arte Nuevo*, 178-180—

Que aquesta variedad deleyta mucho:
Buen exemplo nos da naturaleza,
Que por tal variedad tiene belleza.

[2] Scott, xv. 337; Ker, i. 75.

sibly enough) declines to investigate very carefully whether this was a revival of the old English custom or an imitation of the French, but attacks its legitimacy with the usual, obvious, and fairly sound argument that since no man without premeditation speaks in rhyme, he ought not to do it on the stage, anticipating the retort, "neither does he speak blank verse" by urging that this at any rate is "nearest nature" or less *un*natural. Neander, taking up the glove for "his *new*-loved mistress," practically admits the weakness of his case by first advancing the very argument as to blank verse which Crites has disallowed by anticipation. The rest of his answer is a mixture of true and not so true, of imperfect knowledge and ingenious argument, constantly open to reply, but always interesting as a specimen of critical advocacy. He represents himself as pursuing the discourse so eagerly that Eugenius had to remind him that "the boat stood still," and that they had come to their destination at Somerset stairs. And with a pleasant final patch of description the dialogue closes.

Conspicuous merits of the piece.

In reading it we should keep in mind what he says a quarter of a century later to the same correspondent,[1] that he was at this time seeking his way "in a vast ocean" of criticism without other help than the pole-star of the ancients and the rules of the French stage amongst the moderns. He has given the reading of the pole-star to Crites, and has pointed out the dangers of mere dead-reckoning by it. He has put into the mouth of Sedley (with a touch of malice which that ingenious good-for-nothing must have noticed, and which it is to his credit that he did not resent) a similar reading of the bearings of the different French lights, and has shown how little they assisted the English mariner—indeed, how some of them actually led to rocks and quicksands, instead of warning off from them. In the mouth of Buckhurst, and in his own, he has put the patriotic apology, inclining it in the former case towards laudation of the past, and in the latter to defence of the present: and he has allowed divers excursions from the immediate subject—especially that on "verse," or rhymed heroics, as a dramatic medium. One of the chief of

[1] In the *Discourse on Satire.* Scott, xiii. 3; Ker, ii. 17.

the many merits of the piece is precisely this, that at the time Dryden had read less than at a later, and was less tempted to add quotations or comments. He was following chiefly a very safe guide—Corneille—and he bettered his guide's instruction. It may be said boldly that, up to the date, nothing in the way of set appreciation—no, not in Longinus himself—had appeared equal to the three characters of Shakespeare, Jonson, and Fletcher; while almost greater still is the constant application of the "leaden rule," the taking of book, author, kind, *as it is*, and judging it accordingly, instead of attempting to force everything into agreement or disagreement with a prearranged schedule of rules.

The Middle Prefaces.

After the publication of the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, Dryden (English literature can hardly give too many thanks for it) had more than thirty well-filled years of life allowed him; and to the very last, and at the very last, criticism had its full share of his labours. The "Prefaces of Dryden" never fail to give valuable matter; and we shall have to notice most, if not all of them, though the notices may be of varying length. The immediate successor and, in fact, appendix to the *Essay*, the *Defence* thereof, was only printed in one edition, the second, of *The Indian Emperor*, and is very far from being of the best. Sir Robert Howard was, as has been said, a man conceited and testy, as Shadwell's nickname for him in *The Sullen Lovers*, Sir Positive Atall, hints. He seems to have been nettled by his part of Crites, and replied with some heat in a Preface to his own play, *The Duke of Lerma*. Dryden, who never quite learned the wisdom of Bacon's *dictum*, "Qui replicat multiplicat," and who at this time had not yet learnt the easy disdain of his later manner, riposted (1668) with more sense but with not much more temper. The piece (which was practically withdrawn later) contained, besides not too liberal asperities on Sir Robert's own work, a further "defence of Rhyme," not like Daniel's, where it should be, but where it should not. It is redeemed by an occasional admission, in Dryden's usual and invaluable manner, that he is quite aware of the other side, and by an unhesitating assertion of the primacy of Delight among the Objects of Poetry.

In none of the next three or four of the pieces do we find him quite at his best. For some few years, indeed, the popularity of his splendid, if sometimes a little fustianish, heroics, the profits of his connection with the theatre (which, added to other sources of revenue, made him almost a rich man in his way), and his association with the best society, seem to have slightly intoxicated him. He saw his error, like other wise men, all in good time, and even the error itself was not more than human and pardonable.

The Preface to *An Evening's Love* promises, but for the time postpones, an extension of the criticism of "the last age," and intersperses some valuable remarks on the difference between Comedy and Farce, between Wit and Humour, with a good deal of egotism and some downright arrogance.[1] The *Essay of Heroic Plays* prefixed to *The Conquest of Granada* (1672) is as yet unconverted as to rhyme on the stage; but contains some interesting criticism of Davenant's essays in the kind, and a curious defence (recurred to later) of supernatural "machinery." The main gist of the Preface, besides its defence of the extravagances of Almanzor, is an elaborate adjustment of the Heroic Play to the rules of the much-talked-of Heroic Poem. But though there is a good deal of self-sufficiency here, it is as nothing to the drift of the Epilogue to the second part of the play, and of an elaborate Prose "Defence" of this Epilogue. Here Dryden takes up the position that in "the last age," when men were dull and conversation low, Shakespeare and Fletcher had not, while Jonson did not avail himself of, access to that higher society which delighted to honour him, Dryden. Divers flings at the "solecisms," "flaws in sense," "mean writing," "lame plots," "carelessness," "luxuriance," "pedantry" of these poor creatures lead up to a statement that "*Gentlemen* will now be entertained with the foibles *of each other*." Never again do we find Dryden writing like this; and for his having done it at all Rochester's "Black

[1] "I have further to add that I seldom use the wit and language of any romance or play which I undertake to alter; because my own invention, as bad as it is, can furnish me with nothing so dull as what is there." These invocations of Nemesis are seldom unheard by the acute ears of that satiric Goddess.

Will with a cudgel" exacted sufficient, as suitable, atonement in the Rose Alley ambuscade, even from the lowest point of view. From a higher, he himself made an ample apology to Shakespeare in the Prologue to *Aurungzebe*, and practically never repeated the offence.

The curious *State of Innocence* (1677) (a much better thing than rigid Miltonists admit) is preceded by an equally curious *Apology of Heroic Poetry*, in which, yet once more, we find the insufficient sense in which Imagination (here expressly limited to "Imaging") was used; while the Preface to *All for Love* (1678) is a very little ill-tempered towards an anonymous lampooner, who was, in fact, Rochester. *Troilus and Cressida* (1679) was ushered by a set preliminary *Discourse on the Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy*. No piece illustrates more remarkably that mixed mode of criticism in Dryden, to bring out which is our chief design. On a canvas, not it must be confessed of much interest, woven out of critical commonplaces from Aristotle and Longinus down to Rymer and Le Bossu, he has embroidered a great number of most valuable observations of his own, chiefly on Shakespeare and Fletcher, which culminate in a set description of Fletcher as "a limb of Shakespeare"—a thing happy in itself and productive of happy imitations since. The Preface to the translation of Ovid's *Epistles* (1680) chiefly consists of a fresh defence of that ingenious writer (for whom Dryden had no small fancy), and the Dedication to Lord Haughton of *The Spanish Friar* (1681) is mainly notable for an interesting confession of Dryden's changes of opinion about Chapman and Du Bartas (Sylvester rather), and a sort of apology for his own dallying with these Delilahs of the theatre in the rants of Almanzor and Maximin.

But that to the *Second Miscellany*, five years later, after a period chiefly occupied with the great political satires, ranges with the *Essay*, and not far below the *Fables* Preface, among Dryden's critical masterpieces. The thing is not long—less than twenty pages. But it gives a coherent and defensible, if also disputable, theory of translation, a singularly acute, and, it would appear, original contrast of the *faire* of Ovid and of Claudian, more detailed studies of Virgil, Lucretius (singularly good),

Horace, and Theocritus, and the best critical stricture in English on "Pindaric" verse. After it the note of the same year on Opera, which ushered *Albion and Albanius*, is of slight importance.

The Dedication of the Third Miscellany (specially named *Examen Poeticum*, as the second had been sub-titled *Sylvæ*) contains some interesting protests against indiscriminate critical abuse, the final formulation of a saying sketched before ("the corruption of a poet is the generation of a critic"), illustrated from Scaliger in the past and (not obscurely though not *nominatim*) from Rymer in the present; and, among other things, some remarks on prosody which might well have been fuller.

The Essay on Satire *and the* Dedication of the Æneis.

Between this and the Fables, besides some lesser things,[1] there appeared two of the longest and most ambitious in appearance of Dryden's critical writings, the *Essay* [strictly *Discourse*] *on Satire* prefixed to the *Juvenal*, and the *Dedication of the Æneis*, with, between them, the first writing at any length by a very distinguished Englishman of letters, on the subject of pictorial art, in the shape of the *Parallel of Poetry and Painting* prefixed to the translation of Du Fresnoy *De Arte Graphica*. All, being Dryden's, are, and could not but be, admirably written and full of interest. But the *Juvenal* and *Virgil* Prefaces are, in respect of permanent value, both intrinsically and representively injured by an excess of critical erudition. The time was perhaps not yet ripe for an honest and candid address straight to the English reader. The translator was bound to recommend himself to classical scholars by attention to the paraphernalia of what then regarded itself as scholarship ("other brides, other paraphernalia" no doubt), and to propitiate wits, and Templars, and the gentlemen of the Universities, with original or borrowed discourses on literary history and principle. Dryden fell in with the practice, and obliged his readers with large decoctions of Rigaltius and Casaubon, Dacier and Segrais, which are at any rate more palatable than the learned originals, but which

[1] Lesser, but far from negligible; for the *Character of Saint-Evremond* is both personally and critically interesting, and the critical biographies of Lucian and Plutarch lead straight to Johnson.

make us feel, rather ruefully, that boiling down such things was not the work for which the author of *Absalom and Achitophel* and of *The Essay on Dramatic Poesy* was born.

The Parallel of Poetry and Painting.

As for the *Parallel*, it is of course interesting as being nearly our first Essay, and that by a master hand, in a kind of criticism which has later given excellent results. But Dryden, as he most frankly admits, did not know very much about the matter, and his work resolves itself very mainly into a discussion of the principles of Imitation in general, applied in an idealist manner to the two arts in particular. Again we may say, "Not here, O Apollo!"

The Preface to the Fables.

We have nothing left but the *Preface to the Fables*, the extraordinary merit of which has been missed by no competent critic from Johnson to Mr Ker. The wonderful ease and urbanity of it, the artfully varied forms of reply to the onslaughts of Collier and others, are not more generally agreeable than are, in a special division, the enthusiastic eulogy of Chaucer (all the more entertaining because of its lack of mere pedantic accuracy in places), and the interesting, if again not always rigidly accurate, scraps of literary history. It winds up, as the *Essay* had practically begun, a volume of critical writing which, if not for pure, yet for applied, mixed, and sweetened criticism, deserves to be put on the shelf—no capacious one—reserved for the best criticism of the world.

Dryden's general critical position.

We have seen, over and over again, in individual example; have already partially summed more than once; and shall have to re-sum with more extensive view later, the character and the faults of the critical method which had been forming itself for some hundred and fifty years when Dryden began his critical work. It would be absurd to pretend that he was entirely superior to this "Spirit of the Age"—which was also that of the age behind him, and (with rare exceptions) of the age to come for nearly a hundred years. But, although it may be paradoxical, it is not absurd at all, to express satisfaction that he was not so entirely superior. He was enabled by his partial—and, in so far as his consciousness went, quite sincere—orthodoxy, to obtain an access to the general hearing in England, and even to influence,

long after his death, important literary authorities, as he never could have done if he had set up for an iconoclast. Furthermore, it was not yet time to break these idols. Apollo winked at the neo-classical ignorance and heresy because it was useful. We are so apt—so generously and excusably apt—to look at the Miltons without considering the Clevelands, that we forget how absolutely ungoverned, and in some cases how near to puerility, the latest Elizabethan school was. We forget the slough of shambling verse in which true poets, men like Suckling in drama, men like Lovelace in lyric, complacently wallowed. The strait waistcoat was almost necessary, even after the fine madness, much more after the madness not so fine, of mid-seventeenth-century verse, and, in a less degree, prose. And so, when we find Dryden belittling the rhymes of *Comus* and *Lycidas*,[1] shaking his head over Shakespeare's carelessness, unable with Chapman, as Ben had been with Marlowe, to see the fire for the smoke, we need not in the least excite ourselves, any more than when we find him dallying with the Dowsabels of Renaissance school-criticism. In the first place, the thing had to be done; and in the second place, his manner of doing it went very far to supply antidote to all the bane, as well as to administer the "corsives," as they said then, in the mildest and most innocuous way possible.

Dryden's moly, an herb so powerful that—herein excelling its original—it not only prevented men like Addison from becoming beasts like Rymer, but had the virtue of turning beasts into men,—of replacing the neo-classic jargon by the pure language of criticism,—was that plan of actual comparison and examination of actual literature which is not merely the *via prima* but the *via sola* of safety for the critic. By his time there was assembled a really magnificent body of modern letters, in addition to classical and mediæval. But nobody in the late seventeenth century, except Dryden, really utilised it. Italy and Spain were sinking into premature senility. The French[2] despised or

His special critical method.

[1] "In his *Juvenilia* . . . his rhyme is *always* constrained or forced."—*Discourse on Satire.*

[2] Chapelain might like the early romances (*v. supra*, p. 260). But here Boileau was the spokesman of France.

ignored all modern literatures but their own, and despised and ignored almost equally their own rich and splendid mediæval stores.

Dryden's freedom from this worst and most hopeless vice is all the more interesting because, from some of his utterances, we might have expected him not to be free from it.[1] That theory of his as to Mr Waller; that disastrous idea that Shakespeare and Fletcher were low people who had not the felicity to associate with gentlemen,—might seem likely to produce the most fatal results. But not so. He accepts Chaucer at once, rejoices in him, extols him, just as if Chaucer had taken lessons from Mr Waller, and had been familiar with my Lord Dorset. Back his own side as he may in the duel of the theatres, he speaks of the great lights of the last age in such a fashion that no one has outgone him since. He cannot really take an author in hand, be he Greek or Latin, Italian or French or English, without his superiority to rules and systems and classifications appearing at once, however he may, to please fashion and fools, drag these in as an afterthought, or rather (for Dryden never "drags" in anything save the indecency in his comedies) draw them into the conversation with his usual adroitness. And he is constantly taking authors in hand in this way,—we are as certain that this, and not twaddling about unities and machines, was what he liked doing, as we are that he wrote comedies for money, and satires and criticism itself for love. Now this,—the critical reading without theory, or with theory postponed, of masses of different literatures, and the formation and expression of genuine judgment as to what the critic liked and disliked in them, not what he thought he ought to like and dislike,—this was what was wanted, and what nobody had yet done. Dryden did it—did it with such mastery of expression as would almost have commended a Rymer, but with such genuine critical power and sympathy as would almost have

[1] They have deceived the very elect, *e.g.*, M. Rigault, who in not altogether unnatural amazement at the dictum, "Spenser wanted only to have read the rules of Bossu," classes (*Q. des A. et des M.*, p. 311) Dryden as an *ancien enragé*. But M. Rigault is at a wrong angle in most of the English part of his book,—so much so as to strike a chill into any one who has to criticise a foreign literature, lest, lacking the grace of the Muses, he too go astray.

carried off the absence of merits of expression altogether. He established (let us hope for all time) the English fashion of criticising, as Shakespeare did the English fashion of dramatising,—the fashion of aiming at delight, at truth, at justice, at nature, at poetry, and letting the rules take care of themselves.

Dryden and Boileau.

Perhaps in no single instance of critical authorship and authority does the great method of comparison assist us so well as in the case of Dryden and Boileau. This comparison is absolutely fair. The two were almost exact contemporaries; they represented—so far at least as their expressed and, in both cases, no doubt conscientious, literary creed went—the same sect. *Enfin Malherbe vint* is an exact parallel, whether as a wonderful discovery or a partly mischievous delusion, to the exploits on our numbers by Mr Waller. Both were extremely powerful satirists. Both, though not comparable in intrinsic merit, were among the chief men of letters of their respective countries. Both had a real, and not merely a professional or affected, devotion to literature. Both applied, with whatever difference of exclusiveness and *animus*, a peculiar literary discipline, new to the country of each. And in the case of both—it has been decided by a consensus of the best judges, with all the facts before them up to the present time—there was an insufficient looking before and after, a pretension to limit literature to certain special developments.

We have seen what, in carrying out the scheme which was in effect the scheme of both, were the defects of Boileau. Let us see what, in contra-position to them, are the merits of Dryden.

That, though he makes mistakes enough in literary history, these mistakes are slight in comparison with Boileau's, matters not very much; that, though his satiric touch was more withering even than the Frenchman's, he has no love of lashing merely for the sport, and never indulges in insolent flings at harmless dulness, suffering poverty, or irregular genius; that, though quite prone enough to flatter, he declined to bow the knee to William of Orange, while Boileau persistently grovelled at the feet of William's enemy,—these things matter even less to

us. The fact, the critical fact, remains that the faults of his time and his theory did the least harm to Dryden of all men whom we know, while they did the most to Boileau. And the reason of the fact is more valuable than the fact itself. Boileau, as we have seen, has not left us a single impartial and appreciative criticism of a single author, ancient or modern. Dryden simply cannot find himself in presence of a man of real genius, whether he belongs to his own school or another, without having his critical lips at once touched by Apollo and Pallas. He was sadly ignorant about Chaucer,—a board-school child might take him to task; but he has written about Chaucer with far more real light and sympathy than some at least of the authors of the books from which the board-school child derives its knowledge have shown. His theory about Shakespeare, Fletcher, and Jonson was defective; but he has left us criticisms of all three than which we have, and are likely to have, no better. About the ancients he borrows from both ancients and moderns; but it is remarkable that while Boileau's borrowings are his best, Dryden's are infinitely his worst part. So the consequence is that while Boileau is merely a *point de repère*, a historical document which men simply strive to bring to some relation with the present and the future, Dryden is and will remain at once a source and a model for ever. And he is these because he had the wisdom to ask himself the question, "Do I think this good or bad?" and the wit to answer it, instead of asking and answering the other, "Is it good or bad according to this or that scheme and schedule?"

We have, in short, in Dryden the first very considerable example in England, if not anywhere, of the critic who, while possessing fairly wide knowledge of literature, attributes no arbitrary or conventional eminence to certain parts of it, but at least endeavours to consider it as a whole; of the critic who is never afraid to say "Why?"; of the critic who asks, not whether he ought to like such and such a thing, but whether he does like it, and why he likes it, and whether there is any real reason why he should not like it; of the critic, finally, who tries, without prepossession or convention, to get a general grasp of the book or author, and then to set forth that grasp in luminous

language, and with a fair display of supporting analysis and argument. Dryden, of course, is far—very far—from being a faultless monster of criticism. The application of his own process to his own theory will discover in it many mistakes, independent of the imperfect knowledge which has been already admitted, of the inconsistencies which are more of a virtue than of a defect, and of the concessions to tradition and fashion which are almost wholly unfortunate. Nay, more, it may be granted that Dryden did not escape the dangers of the process itself, the dangers of vagueness, of desultoriness, of dilettantism. But he has the root of the matter in him. He knows that art exists to give pleasure, and when he says "I am pleased with this," he insists on strong reasons being given to show that he ought not to be so. He admits also—nay, insists on—nature, variety, individuality. He will "connoisseur no man out of his senses,"[1] and refuses to be so connoisseured by any, while he will give good reasons for his own and others' pleasure. These are the marks of the true and catholic criticism; and Dryden has them.

Rymer.

Let us pass from him directly to one who has them not. There are few English critics who require to be dealt with at once more carefully and more faithfully than does Thomas Rymer. He has become a name, and to become a name is to be at least on the way to becoming a legend, if not a myth. Moreover, as his legend is (for good reasons) far from a favourable one, it has been made more legendary by those generous or wayward revolts against it which are not uncommon. It has even been held proper, for some time, to shake the head of deprecation over Macaulay's "the worst critic that ever lived." Moreover, Rymer is by no means very accessible—in his critical works, of course, for we speak not here of the *Fœdera*. Whether these were originally published in very small numbers; whether the common-sense of mankind rose against them and subjected them in unusual proportions to the "martyrdom of pies"; or whether (by one of Time's humorous revenges) the copies have been absorbed into special collections relating to that *altissimo poeta* whom Rymer

[1] A phrase of Blake's.

blasphemed, I cannot say. But it is certain that very good libraries often possess either none or only a part of them, and that on the rare occasions on which they appear in catalogues they are priced at about as many pounds as they are intrinsically worth farthings. I think I have seen notices of Rymer which evidently confused *The Tragedies of the Last Age* (1678) with *A Short View of Tragedy* (1693).[1] Besides these two, Rymer, independently of smaller things and reissues, had produced, earlier than the earlier, in 1674, a preface to his own translation of Rapin's *Reflections*, which completes the trinity of his important criticism. No one of the three is long; in fact, *The Tragedies of the Last Age* is a very tiny book, which, short as it is, seems to have exhausted the author before he could carry out half his scheme.

A careful and comparative reading of all three has given me a settled, and I think a just, conception of Rymer as of a man of remarkable learning for his age and country, but intensely stupid to begin with, and Puck-led by the *Zeitgeist* into a charcoal-burner's faith in "the rules." In the *Preface*[2] he is less crabbed than in the two booklets; and, though he already uses the would-be humorous hail-fellow-well-met colloquialism characteristic of the lower Restoration style, and employed even by such a man of letters as L'Estrange and such scholars as Collier and Bentley, he does not push it to the same lengths of clumsy ass-play as later. He thinks that "poets would grow negligent if Critics had not a strict eye

The Preface to Rapin.

[1] The fact is that the two are parts of the same book; and that a *second* edition of the first appeared in 1692, just before the *first* of the second next year.

[2] Vol. ii. pp. 107-130 of the 1706 edition of Rapin in English. At p. 113 Rymer says that he will not here examine the various qualities which make English fit above all other languages for Heroic Poesy, "the world expecting these matters learnedly and largely discussed in a particular treatise on that subject." This apparently important announcement is marginally annotated "Sheringham." I suppose this was Robert S., a Norfolk man (as his name imports), of Caius College, and Proctor at Cambridge just before the Commonwealth ejection. He is described (see *Dict. Nat. Biog.*) as an "excellent linguist," but seems to have been more of an antiquary than of a man of letters. As the *D. N. B.* says nothing of any such work as Rymer glances at, I suppose the world was disappointed of it by his sudden death in May 1678, four years after Rymer wrote.

on their miscarriages," yet he admits that this eye sometimes squints, and compares some critics to "Wasps that rather annoy the Bees than terrify the drones." Then he skims the past, noticing Castelvetro, Malherbe, and others; but thinks that till lately "England was as free from Critics as from Wolves," Ben Jonson having all the critical learning to himself. After praise of Aristotle and a short notice of his actual author, he then proceeds to consider the history of English poetry independently. As for Chaucer, "our language was not then capable of any heroic character," nor indeed was the most polite wit of Europe "sufficient for a great design." Spenser had "a large spirit, a sharp judgment, and a genius for Heroic poetry perhaps above any that ever wrote since Virgil," but "wanted a true idea," and was misled by Ariosto. "They who can love Ariosto will be ravished with Spenser, but men of juster thoughts," &c. His stanza is "nowise proper for our language."

Davenant and Cowley are criticised with politeness, but not very favourably; the faults of both, as well as their designs, were what Rymer was capable of understanding, and neither provokes him to any rudeness on the one hand or stupidity on the other, though there is an occasional ripple betraying an undercurrent of asperity. Then, after some more general remarks, he takes the accepted test of the Description of Night, and applies it with mixed commendation to Apollonius Rhodius, with rather independent criticism to Virgil, slightingly to Ariosto, and rather cavillingly to Tasso, with a good deal of censure to Marino, and with more to Chapelain, with about as much to Père Le Moyne, and then with very considerable praise to that passage of Dryden's in the *Conquest of Mexico* to which Wordsworth was afterwards nearly as unjust as Rymer himself to far greater things.[1] And with this rather patronising "Well done our side!" he stops.

Had Rymer done nothing more than this in criticism it would indeed be absurd to call him our best critic, but it would be still more absurd to call him our worst. There is fair know-

[1] I do not think that Rymer ever *intended* to be rude to Dryden, though his clumsy allusions to "Bays" in the *Short View* naturally rubbed the discrowned Laureate the wrong way for a time.

ledge, there is fair common-sense judgment; the remarks on Chaucer are merely what might be expected, and on Spenser rather better than might be expected; the detailed censure is correct enough; and though there cannot be said to be any great appreciation of poetry, there is interest in it. Above all, if the piece stood alone, we should hardly think of detecting in it even a murmur of the pedantic snarl which is the one unpardonable sin of a critic.

The Tragedies of the Last Age.

In *The Tragedies of the Last Age* Rymer *ruit in pejus*. He had in the interval received some praise, which is always bad for an ill-conditioned man and dangerous for a stupid one; he had conceived the idea of being bee as well as wasp; and he undertook to show Beaumont and Fletcher, Shakespeare and Jonson, their errors, though as matter of fact he lost his wind in belabouring the twins, and had to leave the others till he had taken fifteen years' breath. He shows himself at once in a mood of facetious truculence and self-importance. *He* is not going to emulate "the *Remarks* and eternal triflings of French Grammaticasters." But he is going to set the "quibble-catching" of his countrymen right, and to put an end to "the Stage-quacks and Empirics in poetry" who despise the rules. "Fancy leaps and frisks, and away she's gone; while Reason rattles the chain, and follows after," in which flight Rymer, as often, does not seem to perceive that he is not exactly giving Reason and himself the *beau rôle*. Then he sets to work on three plays of Beaumont and Fletcher. In *Rollo* there is nothing to move pity and terror, nothing to delight, nothing to instruct.[1] In *A King and No King* Panthea actually suggests kissing![2] Arbaces is so bad that he really made Rymer think of Cassius—a withering observation which foretells what the critic was going to say about Shakespeare, though on this occasion he was too exhausted to say it.

[1] Rymer's elaborate directions for removing the Romantic offence of this play, and adjusting it to Classical correctness and decorum, are among the most involuntarily funny things in criticism (pp. 19-24).

[2] Rymer knew something of Old French. How horrified he would have been if he had come across the lines in *Floriant et Florete* (2904, 2905)—

"Si samble qu' enfès voit disant
'Baise, baise, je voil baisier!'"

He said it fifteen years later with no uncertain voice. The one redeeming feature of the *Short View* is its remarkable, if not quite impeccable, learning. Rymer really knows something about "Provencial" poetry, though he confuses it (and thereby made Dryden confuse it) with old French, and actually regards Philippe Mouskès—not even a Frenchman but a Fleming—as a "troubadour." Still, his knowledge is to be praised, and his ignorance forgiven. Less forgivable, but still not fatal, are the singular want of method with which he flings the result of his learning, pell-mell with his own remarks, on the reader, and (in a yet further degree of culpability) the vulgar jeering of his style. But all this might still pass. His mistakes are much less, and his knowledge much greater, than those of any critic of his age. Others have lacked method; and Bentley was quite, Collier very nearly, as coarsely rude. On some general points, such as the utility of the chorus in keeping playwrights to the rules, he is not unintelligent. He is a great admirer of dumb-show, and thinks that many of the tragical scenes, not merely in Shakespeare, but in Jonson, would go better without words.

The Short View of Tragedy.

More than half the little book[1] is occupied with a display of his learning—first in some general remarks on the drama, and then in a history of it which is, with all its mistakes, better informed than anything of the kind earlier. And then Rymer falls on *Othello*. He grants it "a phantom of a fable." But it is a very bad phantom. Ridiculous that Desdemona should love a blackamoor at all; more ridiculous that she should be attracted by his stories of adventure; most that Othello should be made a Venetian general—and so on throughout. But the characters are worse. Rymer simply cannot away with Iago; and this on grounds exquisitely characteristic, not merely of him but of the whole system, of which he is the *reductio ad absurdum*. It is not nearly so much Iago's *theriotes* by which Rymer is shocked, as his violation of the type and the general

[1] It has (excluding an appended extract from the Registers of the Parliament of Paris about Mysteries) only 168 pages of perhaps 200 words each; and much of it is quotation. But it is far longer than *The Tragedies of the Last Age*.

law. "He would pass upon us a close, dissembling, false, insinuating rascal instead of an open-hearted, frank, plain-dealing soldier—a character constantly worn by them for some thousand years in the world."[1] Again, "Philosophy tells us it is a principle in the nature of Man to be grateful. . . . Philosophy must be [the poet's] guide,"[2] therefore Iago is a poetical impossibility. Rymer knows that historically all men are *not* grateful: but never mind. The Type! the Type! the Type![3] One need hardly go farther, but in going we cannot, in one sense, fare worse.[4] "Godlike Romans" (as Mr Dryden had already called them) are, in *Julius Cæsar*, "put in fools' coats and made jack-puddings of," which, says Tom justly, "is a sacriledge." Brutus and Cassius "play a prize, a tryal of skill in huffing and swaggering like two drunken Hectors." In Tragedy Shakespeare "appears quite out of his element; his brains are turned; he raves and rambles without any coherence, any spark of reason, or any rule to control him, and set bounds to his frenzy." Nor does Ben fare much better. He indeed "knew to distinguish men and manners at another rate." In *Catiline* "we find ourselves in Europe, we are no longer in the land of Savages," sighs Rymer with relief. Still Ben, too, "gropes in the dark, and jumbles things together without head and tail;" he, though not "in the gang of the strolling fraternity," like Shakespeare, "must lie a miserable heap of ruins for want of architecture;" he "sins against the clearest light and conviction" by "interlarding fiddle-faddle comedy and apocryphal matters." And so forth.

That Rymer was utterly deaf to the poetry of *Othello*

[1] *Short View*, p. 94.

[2] Ibid., p. 144.

[3] It is curious to read the deliberately stupid misunderstanding of Aristotle by which this is justified.

[4] It may be not unamusing to give an instance or two of the way in which Nemesis has made poor Tom speak truth unconsciously,—

"They who like this author's writing will not be offended to find so much repeated from him" [Shakespeare].—P. 108.

"Never in the world had any pagan Poet his brains turned at this monstrous rate."—P. 111.

"No Pagan poet but would have found some machine for her deliverance."—P. 134.

"Portia is . . . scarce one remove from a *Natural*. She is the own cousin-german . . . with Desdemona."—P. 156.

and of *Julius Cæsar*, that he thinks "the neighing of a horse or the howling of a mastiff possesses more meaning" than Shakespeare's verse, merely demonstrates that he understood the language of the beasts and did not understand that of the man. It disqualifies him for his business, no doubt, hopelessly and of itself. But in the nature of the case we cannot quarrel with him for this Judgment of God; and, on his own theory, mere poetry is of so little consequence that it does not much matter. But where he is cast hopelessly on his own pleadings, where he shows himself (as he has been called) utterly stupid, is in his inability to understand the fable, the characters themselves. He cannot see that the very points which he blunderingly picks out are the *adunata pithana* of his own law-giver — the improbabilities or impossibilities made plausible by the poet's art; and that the excess of this or that quality in Iago, in Desdemona, in Othello, is utterly lost in, or is unerringly adjusted to, their perfect humanity. He is not bound to feel "the pity of it"—which he quotes, much as the pig might grunt at the pearl. But he *is* bound, on Aristotelian, no less than on the most extreme Romantic, principles, to feel that universality which Dryden had ascribed a quarter of a century before, and for all time to come. Therefore, for once, though no Macaulayan, I venture to indorse my unimportant name on a dictum of Macaulay's. I have read several critics — I trust this book may show sufficiently that this is no idle boast. I have known several bad critics from Fulgentius to the Abbé d'Aubignac, and from Zoilus to persons of our own day, whom it is unnecessary to mention. But I never came across a worse critic than Thomas Rymer.[1]

The Rule of Tom the Second.

Between its King and its Helot, our Sparta of the last forty years of the seventeenth century does not offer many persons for exornation, with crown or with stripe, as the case may be.

[1] His best deed was to elicit from Dryden, in *Heads of an Answer to Rymer* (*Works*, xv. 390), the memorable observation that "if Aristotle had seen ours [*i.e.*, "our plays"] he might have changed his mind." One may add that, if Dryden had worked these "Heads" out, he might have solved the whole mystery of criticism as far as in all probability it ever can be solved, or at the very least as far as it could be solved with the knowledge of literature at his disposal.

Sprat in the famous passage of his *History of the Royal Society;* Phillips and Winstanley and Langbaine in their attempts at literary history; Sir Thomas Pope Blount in his other attempt at a critical summary of literature; Collier in his moral *chevauchées* against the ethical corruption of the Drama,—these we may legitimately notice, but at no great length. Dennis, Gildon, and Bysshe will come better in the next Book; and it is hoped that no reader will be so insatiable as to demand the inclusion of Milbourn or of Hickeringill.

Sprat.

The Sprat passage[1] is of the very first importance in the History of English Literature, and has at last been recognised as being so. In it the gorgeous, floriated, conceited style of the earlier century is solemnly denounced, and a "naked natural style of writing" enjoined. But Sprat is careful to point out that this was for the purposes of the Society —for the improvement not of literature but of science; and he does not attempt to argue it out at all from the literary side. The pronouncement expresses the whole sense of the time; it is epoch-making in the history of literary taste; but it does not give itself out as literary criticism, though the spirit of it may be seen in half the literary criticism that follows for nearly a hundred and fifty years.

Edward Phillips.

The infant historians[2] also may be pretty briefly despatched. Edward Phillips, Milton's nephew, was by all accounts a most respectable person; and considering the prevalence of Royalist opinions (especially as he shared them), he says quite as much about his uncle as could be expected. Besides, it is just possible that Milton was no more engaging as an uncle and schoolmaster than he was as a husband and father. He was not alive when *Theatrum Poetarum*[3] appeared in the winter of 1674-75, but the dignity of the opening "Discourse of

[1] History of the Royal Society, 4to, London, 1667, p. 111 *sq.* It may be found conveniently extracted at vol. iii. pp. 271, 272 of Sir Henry Craik's *English Prose Selections* (London, 1894).

[2] It is well known that Thomas Heywood, the dramatist, had planned, if he did not actually execute, a *Lives of the Poets* very much earlier, and some sanguine souls have hoped that it may yet turn up. But the famous passage about poets' nicknames, as well as the whole cast of Heywood's work, suggests that, though biography may have lost something, criticism has not lost much.

[3] London, 12mo.

the Poets and Poetry in general" has made some think that he had had a hand in it. I am not so sure of this. That it is addressed to Thomas Stanley and Sir Edward Sherburne (each, for all the learning of the former and the literary merits of both, among those "rhyming amorists" and Cavaliers whom Milton certainly disliked, and at least affected to disdain) need not much matter. But the style, though often ambitious, does not seem to me above the reach of a man of some learning and moderate ability, who had been about Milton in his youth for years, and at intervals afterwards. Such a man would naturally take the noble-sentiment view of Poetry, talk of the *melior natura* and "that noble thing education," and the like; nor would he be at a loss for Miltonic precedents of another kind when he felt inclined to speak of "every single-sheeted pie-corner poet who comes squirting out an Elegy." The piece is creditable as a whole, and ends with a hesitating attribution of poetic merit to Spenser and Shakespeare, in spite of the "rustic obsolete words," the "rough-hewn clowterly verse" of the one, and the "unfiled expressions, the rambling and undigested fancies" of the other. The body of the book—an alphabetical dictionary, first of ancient then of modern poets, and lastly of poetesses, alphabetically arranged in a singularly awkward fashion by their *prænomina* or Christian names when Phillips knows these, and by others when he does not—is much less important. Here again the nephew has been robbed to give to the uncle the notices of Marlowe and Shakespeare, in both of which the most noticeable expressions, "Clean and unsophisticated wit" and "unvulgar style," apply to Shakespeare himself. Phillips has undoubted credit for appreciation of Drummond (whom he had partially edited from the papers of Scot of Scotstarvit many years earlier) and for singling out from the work of Wither (which was then a by-word with Cavalier critics) *The Shepherd's Hunting* for admiration. But he is much more of a list-maker than of a critic.

His Theatrum Poetarum.

William Winstanley (who brought out his *Lives of the Most Famous English Poets*[1] some dozen years later, and levied contributions on Phillips himself in the most nonchalant manner)

[1] 8vo, London, 1686.

was a mere bookmaker, to whom is assigned the post of manufacturer for years of "Poor Robin's Almanack," and who did other hack-work. His book is chiefly an unmethodical compilation of anecdotes; and as the lives of men of letters have always had more attraction than their works, Winstanley has been found readable. His place here is simply due to the fact that, putting archaics like Bale and Pits aside, he is the second English Historian of Poets, if not of Poetry.

Winstanley's Lives.

In connection with Phillips and Winstanley (whom he avowedly follows and acridly comments, accusing them at the same time of having stolen his thunder from a previously published *Catalogue*) it may be well to notice Gerard Langbaine, the somewhat famous author of the *Account of the English Dramatic Poets.*[1] Of real criticism there is hardly even as much in Langbaine as in his two Esaus or Jacobs, taking it which way you please. But he is the spiritual ancestor of too many later critics; and there are still too many people who confuse his method with that of criticism for him to be quite left out. That he had a particular animosity to Dryden[2] is less to his discredit than to that of the class to which he belongs. This kind of parasite usually fastens on the fattest and fairest bodies presented to it. Langbaine is first of all a *Quellenforscher*. Having some reading and a good memory, he discovers that poets do not as a rule invent their matter, and it seems to him a kind of victory over them to point out where they got it. As a mere point of literary history there is of course nothing to object to in this: it is sometimes interesting, and need never be offensive. But, as a matter of fact, it too often is made so, and is always made so in Langbaine. "I must take the freedom to tell our author that most part of the language is stolen." "Had Mr W. put on his spectacles he would have found it printed thus," &c., &c. This hole-picking generally turns to hole-forging; and one is not surprised to find Langbaine, after

Langbaine's Dramatic Poets.

[1] 1691: but pirated earlier.

[2] I do not know whether this was cause or consequence of his being a friend of Shadwell. But I am bound to note, though with much surprise, that my friend Mr Sidney Lee finds (*D. N. B.*) "no malice" in Langbaine.

quoting at great length Dryden's cavillings at the men of the last age, huddling off as "some praises" the magnificent and immortal eulogies[1] which atone for them. I am afraid that Dante, if he had known Langbaine, would have arranged a special *bolgia* for him; and it would not have lacked later inhabitants.

Temple.

The only too notable quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns produced some deservedly famous literature of the critical kind in England, but its greatest result in that way, *The Battle of the Books*, will be best noticed, together with its author's other works, and in the order rather of its own publication than of its composition. Nor need the earlier protagonists, Temple and Bentley, occupy us much; though the latter will give an opportunity of paying at least respects to a kind of Criticism of which we have perforce said little. Temple, a charming writer, and the author, at the close of his critical *Essay on Poetry*, of one of the most exquisite sentences in English, is simply a critic *pour rire*. The hundred pages of his *Works*,[2] which are devoted to literature, invited the exercise of Macaulay's favourite methods by the enormity of their ignorance, the complacency of their dogmatism, and the blandness of their superficiality. Temple has glimmerings—he intimates pretty plainly some contempt of at least the French "rules"; but he will still be talking of what he has given himself hardly the slightest pains to know.

Bentley.

This could not be said of Bentley, and the *Phalaris* Dissertation has been not undeservedly ranked as one of the representative pieces of critical literature. It is only unfortunate that Bentley has meddled so little with the purely literary side of the matter; and the sense of this misfortune may be tempered by remembrance of his dealings with

[1] This is the odder, and the more discreditable, because one of the few things to be counted to Langbaine for righteousness is a distinct admiration of Shakespeare.

[2] Ed. 1757, vol. iii., pp. 394-501, containing the *Poetry*, the *Ancient and Modern Learning*, and the *Thoughts upon Reviewing that Essay*. Some have charitably found in Temple better knowledge of the Moderns, whom he scorned, than of the Ancients, whom he championed, on the strength of his references to "Runes" and "Gothic Dithyrambics." I cannot be so amiable. It is all a mere parade of pretentious sciolism varnished by style.

Milton. He is, however, perfectly right in at least hinting[1] that the Pseudo-Phalaris might have been convicted on literary counts, as well as on linguistic and chronological, and that, on grounds of style, the theory of those half-sceptics who attributed the *Letters* to Lucian was almost worse than the error of the true believers. That Lucian could have written a line of this skimble-skamble stuff is simply impossible; and it must always remain an instance of the slight sense of style possessed by the Humanists that a really great man of letters, like Politian, should have given countenance to the absurdity.

Collier's Short View.

From any point of critical consideration Collier's famous book[2] must be a most important document in the History of Criticism; and though from some such points it may be of even greater importance than it is to us, we can in no wise omit it. For it is probably the earliest instance in our history where a piece of criticism has apparently changed, to a very great extent, the face of an important department of literature, and has really had no small part in bringing about this change. It is, however, indirectly rather than directly that it concerns us; for it is only here and there that Collier takes the literary way of attack, and in that way he is not always, though he is sometimes, happy. Curiously enough, one of his felicities in this kind has been imputed to him for foolishness by his great panegyrist. It is not necessary to feel that sympathy with his opinions on ecclesiastical and political affairs which Macaulay naturally disclaimed, and which some others may cheerfully avow, in order to see that the Tory critic was quite right, and the Whig critic quite wrong, in regard to the dissertations on the Greek and Latin Drama. What may be thought of their technical scholarship does not matter. But Macaulay's undoubted familiarity with

[1] *Diss.*, § xvi. My copy is the London ed. of 1817.

[2] *A Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage.* London, 1698. The great popularity of the book caused it to be quickly reprinted: my copy, though of the first year, is the third edition. Collier's rejoinder to his victims next year contains good things, but is of less importance. And it does not matter much to us whether he originally drew anything from the Prince de Conti's pietist *Traité sur la Comédie* (1667). The Ancients, and the Fathers, and the Puritans were in any case quite sufficient sources.

the classics must have had a gap in it, and his wide knowledge of modern literature several much greater gaps, if he did not know—first, that Collier *had* ancient criticism on his side, and secondly, that the allegation of ancient authority and practice where favourable, the arguing-off of it where inconvenient, were exactly the things to influence his generation. When everybody was looking back on the Vossian precept, "Imitate the Ancients, but imitate them only in what is good," and drawing forward to the Popian axiom,

"To copy Nature is to copy *them*,"

"dissertations on the Greek and Latin Drama" were not otiose at all, they were absolutely necessary.

But for the most part, as is notorious, Collier is as ethical as Plutarch or Plato. It was desirable that he should be so, and nobody but a paradoxer will ever defend the style of play-writing which produced such things as *Limberham*, and *The Old Bachelor*, and even *The Relapse*—though the first be Dryden's, and contain some good things in the characters of Prudence and Brainsick, though the second show us the dawn of Congreve's wit, and though the third contain handfuls of the sprightliest things in the English language. It is in reference to this last, by the way, that Collier chiefly quits the path of ethical criticism, and takes to that of literary, or at least dramatic. There is hardly a sharper and more well-deserved beating-up of the quarters of a ragged dramatic regiment anywhere than that (at p. 212 *sq.*) on the glaring improbabilities of Vanbrugh's plot, the absolute want of connection between the title part of it and the real fable—Tom Fashion's cheating his brother of Hoyden—and the way in which the characters are constantly out of character in order that the author may say clever things. But Collier has serious matters on his mind too much to give us a great deal of this; and the other definitely literary points which I have noted, in a very careful re-reading of the piece for this book, are not numerous. I wish he had not called *Love's Labour's Lost* (p. 125) "a very silly play"; but how many people were there then living who would have thought differently? I wish he had worked out his statement (rather rash from his own point

of view) at p. 148, "Poets are not always exactly in rule." He might have developed his views on the Chorus (p. 150) interestingly. I have some other places; but they are not important. The sum is, that though Collier evidently knew most critical authorities, from Aristotle and Horace, through Heinsius and Jonson, to Rapin, and Rymer, and Dryden himself, very well; though he could (pp. 228, 229) state the Unities, and even argue for them—this was not his present purpose, which was simply to cleanse the stage. His interest in other matters in fact blunted what might have been a keen interest in literature proper. And this is thoroughly confirmed by study of his interesting and characteristic *Essays*,[1] where, out of more than five hundred pages, exactly four are devoted to literature, and these give us nothing but generalities.

That Collier's victory was very mainly due to the fact that he struck in at the right moment, as spokesman of an already formed popular opinion, would be a matter of reasonable certainty in any case; but the certainty is here historical. One of many proofs at hand is in the curious lighter-full of critical lumber which Sir Thomas Pope Blount launched four (or eight?) years before Collier let his fireship drive into the fleet of the naughty playwrights. In this book,[2] dedicated to Mulgrave, that noble poet himself, Roscommon, Cowley, and the lately published and immensely influential *Whole Duty of Man*, are quoted to support the argument that "A poet may write upon the subject of Love, but he must avoid obscenity."[3]

Sir T. P. Blount.

Sir Thomas, however, comes within the inner, and not merely the outer, circle of criticism for his aims and his collections, though certainly not for any critical genius that he displays.

[1] *Essays upon Several Moral Subjects* (3rd ed., 2 vols., London, 1698). Nor can one make out an entirely good case (though something may be done) for Collier in the matter of that description of Shakespeare, which Mr Browning has maliciously chosen, as a motto for *Ferishtah's Fancies*, from the *Historical Dictionary*: "His genius was jocular, but, when disposed, he could be very serious."

[2] *De Re Poetica*, or *Remarks upon Poetry*, &c., 4to, London, 1694. It is even said to have first appeared in 1690.

[3] Both Roscommon and Mulgrave were critics in their way, and the former's *Essay on Translated Verse* is one of those numerous documents which would have been of the utmost service to us in the last volume, but which cannot receive detailed treatment in this.

His "Remarks upon Poetry," no less than the "Characters and Censures" which make up the other part of his work, are the purest compilation: and though we are certainly not without compilers in these days (what indeed can a Historian of Criticism do but compile to a great extent?), there are very few of us who are at once honest enough and artless enough to follow the method of Blount. Whether he is arguing that good humour is essentially necessary to a poet (how about the *genus irritabile?*) or that a poet should not be addicted to flattery, or discussing the "Eglogue, Bucholic [*sic*], or Pastoral," whether he is following Phillips and Winstanley and borrowing from both, in compiling a dictionary of poets, he simply empties out his common place-book. "Dryden remarks," "Rapin observes," "Mr Cowley tells us," "Mr Rymer can nowise allow" (this is happy, for it was habitual with Mr Rymer "nowise to allow"), such are the usherings of his paragraphs. He is not uninteresting when he is original (*cf.* his remarks on Waller); but one is almost more grateful to him for his collections, which put briefly, and together, the critical dicta of a vast number of people. Here we may read, with minimum of trouble, how Julius Scaliger could not see anything in Catullus but what is common and ordinary; how Dr Sprat said that till the time of Henry the Eighth there was nothing wrote in the English language except Chaucer that a man would care to read twice; how Scaliger once more, and Petrus Crinitus, and Johannes Ludovicus Vives, and Eustatius Swartius, thought Claudian quite in the first rank of poets; how Tanneguy le Fèvre shook his head over Pindar as having "something too much the air of the Dithyrambick"; and how Cœlius Rhodiginus was good enough to find that same Dantes Aligerus, who displeased others, a "poet not contemptible."[1] These things are infinitely pleasant to read, and give one a positive affection for Sir Thomas Pope Blount as one turns them in the big black print of his handy quarto; yet perhaps it would be excessive to call him a great critic. What he does, besides providing this *gazophylacium*

[1] The remark may with more proportion be made of Cœlius himself, a very worthy Humanist, whom Lilius Giraldus pronounces to be *multifariam eruditus, parum tamen in pangendis versibus versatus.*

for the connoisseur, is to show how wide the interest in criticism was.

A further turn, and the last in this walk, may be furnished to us by one of his own quotations (p. 137 of the *Characters and Censures*) of an answer to the question, "Whether Milton and Waller were not the best English poets, and which was the better of the two?" from *The Athenian Mercury*, vol. v., No. 4. For this curious and interesting medley of Dunton's, and Samuel Wesley's, and others', was almost the first to provide something in English answering, or that might have answered, to the *Journal des Savants* and the *Mercure Galant*. Actually, the *Mercury* was not very literary. I do not pretend to have examined the original volumes with any very great care. But in the three copious books which were either directly compiled out of it, or composed in imitation — *the Athenian Oracle*,[1] *Athenian Sport*, and *The British Apollo* — literature holds no very large place. The *Oracle* does indeed give at p. 438 a very elaborate answer to the question, "Whether the Dramatic Poets of the Last Age exceeded those of this?" and the *Apollo*, besides a versification of the identical query and answer which Blount had quoted, contains a long descant on the Origin of Poetry, and a remarkably shrewd answer to the question, "Which is the best poet—Boileau, Molière, or La Fontaine?" But the time of literary periodicals in England was not yet, though this was the very eve of it: and they must therefore be postponed.[2]

Periodicals: The Athenian Mercury, &c.

[1] The *Athenian Mercury* (1690-97) ran to twenty volumes. The *Oracle*, from which the late Mr Underhill made his interesting selection (London, n. d.), was issued in *four*. I have *one* (London, 1703), which calls itself an "Entire Collection," as well as *Athenian Sport* (London, 1707), and *The British Apollo* (3rd ed., London, 1718).

[2] An exception may perhaps be made in favour of J. [Cornand] de La Croze's *Works of the Learned*, which, translated wholly or mainly by its author from the French, began to appear monthly in August 1691, and was collected before long in a thin quarto volume. Its contents are real reviews in almost every point—down to some sharp remarks by the editor-reviewer on plagiarisms by the *Athenian Mercury*, and complaints of the absence of indices to lessen the labour of reviewing. The books reviewed are, as a rule, of no great interest; but the summaries of their contents are generally good, and the views advanced are at least sometimes made the subject of passably argumentative discussion.

INTERCHAPTER V.

In the present Interchapter we come to a sort of Omphalos of the whole projected History. Here and here only, up to the present day, do we find a Catholic Faith of criticism, not merely at last constituted, but practically accepted over the whole literary world. In ancient times, though it is not difficult to discern a creed of a not wholly dissimilar character, yet that creed was arrived at in roundabout fashion, and was never applied universally to poetry and prose as literature. In the Middle Ages there was no such creed at all. In the century which—or rather a certain aspect of it—will furnish us with the subject of the last Book of the present volume, the catholic faith still maintains, and even, as is the wont of such things, rather tightens, its hold as received orthodoxy; but there are grumblings, and threatenings, and upheavals on the one hand, and on the other the tendency to a dangerous latitudinarianism. In that which, with the permission of the fates, will, with the Dissidents of the Eighteenth, give the subject of the next volume, there is no parallel consensus even of a prevailing party. Take a dozen critics of any distinction, at different times and in different countries of the seventeenth century in Europe, and ask them to enunciate some general laws and principles of literary criticism. The results, if not slavishly identical, would be practically the same, putting aside particular and half unreal squabbles of Ancient and Modern and the like. Do the same at any time for the last hundred—certainly for the last seventy or eighty—years, and the result would be a Babel. If any two of the utterances did not betray direct contradiction, it would probably be because the speakers began at entirely different facets of the subject.

Whether this literary unanimity—which resembles the ecclesiastical unanimity, on the ruins of which it grew, not least in being a little unreal—was a good thing or a bad thing in itself, is one of those larger questions which we do not purpose to argue out here. The point for us is that it existed. It was compatible, as in the other case, with a good deal of minor difference: there might be literary Scotists and Thomists; there might even (as in the Ancient and Modern case) be a Great Schism of the most apparently important kind. But this was as a rule mere jangling; and the more serious of the Moderns generally tried to make out little more than that their favourites could claim as much, or more, of the graces which both esteemed, as the other people's favourites possessed.

We have seen in the last Interchapter how something like this creed had been achieved—though not without a good deal of opposition, and hardly, in any case, with the result of authoritative and complete statement—in Italy, and to some extent borrowed thence, in other countries, before the end of the sixteenth century itself. The seventeenth did little more than crystallise it, lay stress on particular points, fill up some gaps, arrange, codify, illustrate. The absence of dissidence, except on the minor points, is most remarkable. In regard to Aristotle, in particular, there are no Patrizzis and hardly any Castelvetros. Men tack on a considerable body of Apocrypha to the canonical books of the Stagirite, and misinterpret not a little that he actually said. But they never take his general authority in question, seldom the authority of any ancient, and that of Horace least of all. The two great artificial conceptions of the elaborate "Unities" drama, with Acts and Scenes taking the place of the choric divisions, and of the still more artificial "Heroic Poem," with its Fable, its Epic Unity, its Machines, and so forth, acquire in theory—if luckily, as, for instance, in England, by no means in practice—greater and greater dignity. It becomes a sort of truism that the drama is the most beautiful and ingenious, the heroic poem the noblest, thing on which the human mind can exercise itself. But they are difficult things, sir! very difficult things. Each is sharply isolated as a Kind: and the other Kinds are

ranged around and below them. You never criticise any thing first in itself, but with immediate reference to its Kind. If it does not fulfil the specifications of that Kind, it is either cast out at once or regarded with the deepest suspicion.

Further, all the Kinds in particular, as well as Poetry itself in general, possess, and are distinguished by, Qualities which are, in the same way, rigidly demanded and inquired into. It is generally, if not quite universally, admitted that a poem must please: though critics are not quite agreed whether you are bound to please only so as to instruct. But you must please in the Kind, by the Quality, according to the Rule. There is no room for nondescripts; or, if they are admitted at all, they must cease to be nondescripts, and become Heroi-comic, Heroi-satiric, "Tragical-comical-historical-pastoral,"[1] or what not.

This general view may seem unorthodox to those who put faith in the notion—to be found in some books of worth, as well as of worship—that there was a "Romantic revolt" in the beginning of the seventeenth century—that there was even a kind of irruption or recrudescence of mediæval barbarism, and that the pronounced and hardened classicism of the later century was a fresh reaction—a case of *Boileau à la rescousse!* The texts, and the facts, and the dates, do not, to my thinking, justify this view of history, in so far, at least, as criticism is concerned. The crystallising of the classical creed goes on regardless of Euphuism, earlier and later, in England, of Marinism in Italy, of Culteranism and Conceptism in Spain, of the irregular outburst of similar tastes in France, which marks the reign of Louis XIII. As we have seen, Ogier, in the last named country, at the very moment of striking a blow for Romantic drama, admits that the critics are against him; and we have also seen how they were. In England, Sidney, at the beginning of the great Elizabethan period, holds out hands to Jonson at the end. The very Spanish Romantics, when

[1] It may be doubted whether there is anything more wonderful in Shakespeare than the way in which this Polonian speech, at one slight side-blow, impales sixteenth-seventeenth-century criticism, with the due pin, on the due piece of cork, for ever.

they come to consider the matter critically, make an unblushing transaction between conscientious theory and popular practice: and such an Italian iconoclast as Beni is classical, in the very act and process of belittling the classics.

At the same time, this accepted faith of Criticism, when we come to examine it, is a very peculiar Catholicity. Uncompromisingly Aristotelian in profession, its Aristotelianism, as has been recognised by an increasing number of experts from the time of Lessing downwards, is hopelessly adulterated. Many of the insertions and accretions are purely arbitrary: others come from a combination of inability to forget, and obstinate refusal frankly to recognise, the fact that the case is quite a different case from that which Aristotle was diagnosing. But, by the time at least when the creed became triumphant, a new Pope, a new Court of Appeal, has been foisted in, styling itself Good Sense, Reason, or even (though quite Antiphysic) Nature. That this anti-Pope, this Antiphysis, was partly created by the excesses of the Euphuist-Gongorist movements, need not be denied; but this is comparatively irrelevant. We have traced above, in almost all their principal exponents, the curious, and sometimes very ludicrous, attempt to conciliate that *furor poeticus* which the ancients had never denied, with those dictates of good sense which the ancients were presumed to have accepted and embodied. A professed satirist could evolve, in his happiest moments, nothing more comic than the eirenicon of Mambrun,[1] or, rather, than his clinical examination of the poet in fury, and his observation of the poet in his right mind.

The survey of the development of this phenomenon, or group of phenomena, in different countries, requires less minuteness than was needed in the last Interchapter, because the central stage of the movement is both of less importance and of less complexity than the beginnings of it: but it is essential to the scheme of these Interchapters, and to that of the whole book, that some such survey should be given.

In Italy, as we have seen, the results of the period were almost insignificant—a fact no doubt connected with, though

[1] *V. supra*, p. 268.

in no sense necessarily caused by, the declension of the Italian creative genius after Tasso. We have, it may be hoped, established, by the slow but irresistible process of reciting the actual history, the truth that no constant ratio exists between periods of creation and periods of criticism—that they may go hand in hand, or that one may follow the other, or that both may fail to put in any important appearance, as Fate and metaphysical aid may determine. This, for Italy, was a period of the last kind, though not one of its very worst examples. The Italians continued both to play at criticism in their Academies, and to accumulate solid though second-hand work in such laboratories as those of Aromatari. They fought out the half-mock battle of the Ancients and Moderns, as became them, before other nations meddled with it: and they still maintained, for long, though not for the whole time, that position of supremacy, as masters in title to Europe, which the great achievements of the preceding century had given them. But they added nothing to their claims, and by degrees the supremacy passed from them.[1]

That it passed to France is an accepted truth, and like most, though not all, accepted truths, this has so much of the real quality that it is idle to cavil at it. That it has been abused there can be little doubt—or could be little if people would take the small trouble necessary to ascertain the facts. I do not know who first invented the term "Gallo-Classic," which, to judge by those Röntgen rays which the reader of examination-papers can apply, has sunk deep into the youthful mind of this country. It is a bad word. I have taken leave to call it "question-begging, clumsy, and incomplete," before now; and I repeat those epithets with a fresh emphasis here. It begs the question whether "Italo-Classic" would not, in its own kind, be the properer term: it is clumsy because the two parts of it are not used in the same sense; and it is incomplete because it does not intimate that much beside French influence, and that a very peculiar and sophisticated kind of Classical influence, went to

[1] The attitude of Milton and Dryden respectively illustrates this well. There was scarcely more than twenty years between the two poets. But Milton looks to the Italians first, if not also last, among the moderns, for criticism. Dryden, though he knows and cites them, does not.

the making of the thing. But there *was* French influence: and for some three-quarters of a century France was the head manufactory in which Italian, Classical, and other ideas were torn up and remade into a sort of critical shoddy with which (as with other French shoddy in that and other times) Europe was rather too eager to clothe itself. Some pains have been taken in the foregoing Book to put the reader in a position to appreciate the real rise, progress, and history of French criticism of the Neo-classic[1] type. The survey, whatever difference may exist as to its justice in matter of opinion, will not, I think, be found erring in matters of fact: and it will show that the position usually accorded to Boileau requires some reconsideration. But Boileau was undoubtedly the greatest man of letters who, holding these views, devoted himself specially and definitely to the expression of them; and, for good or for ill, his name is associated with the movement. I agree with Keats,[2] who here, as in so many other matters, came right by genius. Those of us who do not possess this royal key can, at any rate, if we choose to take the trouble, come right by knowledge.

The Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns—though we have spoken hard words of it—might look like revolt against the tyranny of Despréaux, and it undoubtedly spread seeds of the more successful revolution which followed; but the more one studies it, the more one sees that the revolt was in the main unconscious. As we have partly shown, and as might be shown much more fully, the Moderns were, as a rule, just as "classical" in their ideas as the Ancients. They were as incapable of catholic judgment; they were even more ignorant of literature as a whole; they were at least as apt to introduce non-literary criteria; they were as much under the obsession of the Kind, the Rule (cast-iron, not leaden), the sweeping generalisation. Too commonly the thing comes to this—that the man who can conjugate *tupto* will not hear of anything which lessens the importance of that gift, and that the man who cannot conjugate *tupto* will not hear of any virtue attaching to it.

[1] "Neo-classic" itself is not a very "blessed" word; but it has been long recognised, and the objections to it are mainly formal.

[2] In the well-known and early lines on "Sleep and Poetry."

Most other countries require little notice here. The Germans make practically no figure; the Dutch confine themselves to classical study and the popularisation of reviewing; and the Spaniards, with characteristic indolence, refuse to work out the interesting problem presented to them by the recalcitrance of their national drama to the consecrated ideas of the general creed. England is of more importance. I have tried to show that it is of very much more; but this importance belongs entirely to one man. This one man in his time played many parts: and as the main aim of literature is to give pleasure, and to produce original sources thereof, we cannot perhaps say that his critical part was the greatest. But we may almost say that it was the most important. We can imagine English literature without the poetry of Dryden: it would be wofully impoverished, but somebody would take up the burden, probably before Pope. Certainly Pope would take it up, though with much more to do. But English criticism, and, what is more, European criticism of the best and most fruitful kind, would have had, if Dryden had been absent, to seek some totally new source: and it is impossible to tell where that source would have been found. There is no precedent—Lilius Giraldus and Patrizzi between them might have produced one in Italy, but it is of the highest significance that they did not—for Dryden's peculiar way of shaking different literatures and different examples of literature together, of indicating the things that please him in all, and of at least attempting to find out why they please him. It is this, not his parade of Rules, and his gleanings from the books, that makes his critical glory: and it is this in which, among critics up to his own time, he is alone.

Yet even he does parade "rules"; even he does belaud Rapin, and Le Bossu, and even Rymer; even he would have been, no doubt, quite as ready to take the oath to Boileau as he was nobly determined not to take it to William. His genius is recalcitrant to the orthodoxy of the time; but something else in him accepts it. It is not for nothing that he never *published* that word of power which dissolves all the spells of Duessa—"Had Aristotle seen our plays he might have changed his mind."

That, however, there was, at any rate in the earlier part of the time, much blind, and even a little conscious revolt against classicism, independent of the Ancient and Modern quarrel, is not to be wholly denied. I have hinted doubts as to the correctness of regarding the Euphuist-Metaphysical extravagances in England, Marinism in Italy, Gongorism in Spain, and the fantastic and "precious" fancies which mark the reign of Louis XIII. and the Fronde in France, as either deliberate reactions against classicism, or abortive births and false dawns of Romance. They are in almost every case direct results of the Romantic or mediæval side of the earlier Renaissance—last things, not first. But, by the end of the century, they were almost everywhere got well under; though in Spain, their greatest stronghold, it was not till the eighteenth century itself was some way advanced that Luzán administered the critical *misericorde*, or, if we must use the language of the country, played *despeñador* to them. Any other interpretation of the phenomena seems to me to distort them and make them unintelligible, while the procession of the Metaphysical from the Spenserian stage, of Marinism from Tasso, of Gongorism from the great Spanish age, and of the French extravagants from the Spaniards and Marino, working not a little on the Pléiade itself, is natural, historical, and consistent with logic. But these very facts prepare and lead up to the triumph of Neo-Classicism.

By dint, however, of these actions and interactions, there was actually evolved, towards the end of the century, a sort of false Florimel or Duessa, who was called Taste. She was rather a Protean Goddess, and reflected the knowledge or the want of it, the real taste or the want of it, possessed by her priests and worshippers. The Taste of Dryden and the Taste of Rymer are two totally different things; there is even a very considerable difference between the taste of Hédelin and the taste of Bouhours. But in all save the very happiest minds the Taste of this time, as far as Poetry is concerned almost wholly, and to a great extent as regards prose, is vitiated by all manner of mistaken assumptions, polluted by all manner of foolish and hurtful idolatries. There is the Idol of the Kind

which has been noticed; the Idol of the Quality; the Idol of Good Sense, the most devouring of all.[1] It is agreed, and agreed very pardonably, that it is not well to write

"And periwig with snow the baldpate woods."

But the baser folk go on from this—and all but the very noblest have some difficulty in preventing themselves from going on—to think that a man should not write

"The multitudinous seas incarnadine."

There is a sense, and a very proper sense, that, in a certain general way, style must suit subjects: that you ought not to write to a Child of Quality, aged five, as you would do to Queen Anne, aged fifty.[2] But this topples over into the most absurd limitations, so that, a little later than our actual time, we shall find Pope taking modest credit to himself with Spence for that, though Virgil in his Pastorals "has sometimes six or eight lines together *that are epic*," he had been so scrupulous as "scarce ever to have two together, even in the *Messiah*." Indeed it is hardly possible to find a better *reductio ad absurdum* of Neo-Classicism than this. You lay down (as we saw long ago that Servius did lay it down), from a general induction of the practice of a particular poet, such and such a rule about Virgil's styles in his various works. Then you turn this individual observation into a general rule. And then you go near to find fault with the very poet from whom you have derived it because he does not always observe it—as if his unquestionable exceptions had not as much authority as his supposed rules. Nor is there any doubt that this fallacy derives colour and support from the false Good Sense, the Pseudo-Reason. The induction from practice is hitched on to Reason so as to become a deduction and a demonstration, and

[1] Perhaps there is not a more unhappy gibe in literature (which has many such) than that in *The Rehearsal* on Bayes, who is made to say that "Spirits must not be confined to talk sense." They certainly must not; even Addison (*Sp.*, 419) admits that "their sense ought to be a little *discoloured*." There is much virtue in this "discolour."

[2] It may be said that this was later. But Prior was a man of thirty-six in 1700.

once established as that, you deduce from it anything you like. Meanwhile Good Sense, as complaisant to the critic as stern to the victim of his criticism, will approve or disapprove anything that you choose to approve or disapprove, will set her seal to any arbitrary decision, any unjust or purblind whim, and can only be trusted with certainty to set her face invariably against the highest poetry, and often against certain kinds not so high.[1]

The result of all this is that, with the exception of Dryden and somewhat later Fontenelle (see next Book), hardly any critics of the time achieve, with any success, the highest function of the true critic of literature, the discovery and celebration of beautiful literary things. It is not their business, or their wish, to set free the "lovely prisoned soul of Eucharis." If Eucharis will get a ticket from the patronesses of the contemporary Almack's, and dress herself in the prescribed uniform, and come up for judgment with the proper courtesy, they will do her such justice as Minerva has enabled them to do; but if not, not. Sometimes (as in the case of the immortal Person of Quality who took the trouble to get Spenser into order[2]) they will good-naturedly endeavour to give her a better chance, poor thing! But they will never kiss the Daughter of Hippocrates on the mouth, and receive the reward thereto appropriated.[3]

That, on the other hand, there is observable, throughout the century, a certain interpenetration of the older and more Romantic spirit—in the creative work chiefly, but even there dying down,

[1] Yet it is not for the twentieth century to throw stones at the seventeenth, till we leave off laying down rules of our own manufacture for still earlier ages, and reproving Marlowe and the youthful Shakespeare for being "too lyrical" in tragedy.

[2] See *Spenser Redivivus*. London, 1686-87. The Person of Quality "delivers" Spenser "in Heroick numbers," as per sample—

"Then to the lady gallant Arthur said,
All grief repeated is more grievous made."

This is "what Spenser ought to have been instead of what is to be found in himself."

[3] Dryden and Fontenelle themselves are of course not quite sinless. The latter (v. *infra*, p. 505) proposes emendations in the magnificent couplet which he cites from *Saint-Louis;* and Dryden, let us say, does not improve Shakespeare and Chaucer. But it was on Shakespeare and Chaucer as they were, not as he travestied them for popular use, that Dryden passed the immortal eulogies; and Fontenelle thought that the couplet even as it stood "might easily *not* have been found by distinguished poets," which is from him equivalent to a blare of superlatives from our modern critics.

in the critical overmastered from the first, and less and less perceptible,—this opinion will meet with no contradiction here, but, on the contrary, with the strongest support. All the eccentric phenomena, as they may be called, which have been noticed from Euphuism to Gongorism, are symptoms of this on the larger scale; and other things—the fancy of Chapelain himself for the Romances, the lingering attraction which Gongorism exercises even on such a man as Bouhours—confirm it. Yet even this was, as has been said, steadily dying down; and by the end of the century the old Phœnix was nearly in ashes, though the new bird was to take slow rebirth from them. I am myself inclined to think that the signs of Romantic leaning in Dryden belong to the new, not to the old, chapter of symptoms; and that in this way England, the last, save perhaps Spain, to give up, was the first to feel again for, the standard of Romanticism. But in this Dryden was in advance, not merely of all his countrymen, but of all Europe; and he did not himself definitely raise any flag of revolt. On the contrary, he always supposed himself to be, and sometimes was, arguing for a reasonable and liberal Classicism.

It was not in flippancy, but in logical connection with the present subject, that attention was drawn above [1] to a certain *aporia* of Tassoni's on the admitted lovesomeness, body and soul, of *le donne brutte*, and on the tricks which *bruttezza* and *bellezza* play to each other. If that ingenious poet and polemic had but pushed his inquiries a little further, and extended them in purview as well as lineally, he might have come to great things in criticism. It might, for instance, have struck him whether the accepted notions of literary beauty were not peculiarly like those of physical beauty, which were also those of his century. These laws laid it down that "from the chin to the pit betwixt the collar-bones there must be two lengths of the nose," that the whole figure must be "ten faces high," and that "the inside of the arm, from the place where the muscle disappears to the middle, is four noses"; while the careful calculators noted all the while with dismay that both the Apollo Belvidere and the Medicean Venus set these proportions at the most god-

[1] P. 325.

like defiance.[1] He would (or he might) have observed that, just as when you have settled exactly what a *bella donna* must not have, there is apt to sail, or slip, into the room somebody with that particular characteristic to whom you become a hopeless slave, so, when you have settled the qualifications of the drama with the infallibility of Hédelin, and those of the Epic with the finality of Le Bossu, there comes you out some impudent production which is an admirable poem, while the obedient begettings of your rules are worthless rubbish. Tassoni, I say, might have done this; he seems to have had quite the temper to do it; but he did it not. It was doubtless with him, as with others, a case of *Di terrent et Jupiter hostis*—the gods of their world and their time forbade them.

But the angry gods were not wholly able to maintain their anger; and at the other end of the century, in that Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns which, for all its irritating *ignorationes elenchi*, did certainly assist in the discussion of general æsthetic problems, we find, among other glimpses, an advance, though only a partial advance, on this suggestion of the *Pensieri*. Perrault, who doubtless knew Tassoni (one of his brothers had translated the *Secchia*), has a curious passage on the diversity of the forms of feminine beauty. He had,[2] he says, visited the gallery of a connoisseur who had collected portraits of the most famous beauties of Europe for a century past. There were not two of the same type of loveliness; and of the spectators there were not two who fixed on the same portrait as the most beautiful. But Perrault, though he has had this glimpse of the true path opened up to him, does not dare pursue it. He is as convinced as the rest of them that you can reduce ideas of beauty to a minimum which is always invariable, though you may add others which vary; and he is perfectly arbitrary in his admissions and exclusions of these latter. He hates Gothic architecture; it may be strongly suspected that he would fall far short of Chapelain in appreciating Romance, for all his fairy tales. His criticisms of the Ancients belie his theory itself; for

[1] See the whole absurd scheme in the appendix-matter to Dryden's Translation of Du Fresnoy (*ed. cit. sup.*, xvii. 429).

[2] *Parallèle*, ii. 45; cf. Rigault, p. 187.

he will not open his eyes to see the beauty of their peculiarity. His remarks on Homer are pitiable. My always estimable and not seldom admirable predecessor, Blair, was no doubt sadly "left to himself" when he selected,[1] as the awful example of a man of bad taste, the person who said that Homer was no better than "some old tale of chivalry." But Perrault, I fear, is a more terrible spectacle when he says that none of the Three Tragedians will bear comparison with Corneille (and I think I may claim the merit of not undervaluing Corneille), that nobody but professed scholars can read Aristophanes, and that Ovid is the inferior of Benserade. When we read these things —and except in Fontenelle, the eternal exception, they are to be found in every espouser of the Modern side, just as the corresponding absurdities are to be found in every defender of the Ancients—there is nothing to say but "This is all out of focus. Both of you see men as trees walking."

A summary of the whole merits and defects of neo-classicism must again be postponed; though with no further prorogation than to the end of the next Book and the present volume. As for the special defects of this special period we have said enough; and we may conclude this Interchapter with a glance at its special merits. They are partly of a negative kind, but they certainly exist. In the Middle Ages, as we have seen, there was no code of criticism at all; in the sixteenth century only a growing approach to one, though the approach had become very near at the last. Some outbreaks of heterodoxy—the last stand of Romance for the time—had, as usually happens, drawn the orthodox together, had made them sign a definite, or almost definite, instrument or confession. Just or unjust, adequate or inadequate, even consistent or inconsistent, as it may be, from the point of view of a very searching and all-inspecting logic, the neo-classicism of the late seventeenth century was a thing about which there could be no mistake. It knew its own mind about everything which it chose to consider, and valiantly shut its eyes to everything which it chose to ignore. For a time—a short time only, of course, for the triumph of a religion is always the signal for the appearance of a heresy—the majority of

[1] *V. infra*, p. 463.

people had not much more doubt about what was the proper thing to believe in and admire in literature, than they had about the multiplication table. It became possible—and it was done, as we shall see, first in Italy, then elsewhere—to write real literary histories: it became still more easily possible to criticise new books on a certain basis of accepted postulates. And it is by no means certain that this provisional orthodoxy was not a necessary condition of the growth of the new study of Æsthetic, which, though it has done criticism harm as well as good, has certainly done it good as well as harm.

Nor is it possible to deny that there was something to admire in the creed itself. It was weakest—it was in fact exceedingly weak—on the poetical side; but the world happened to have accumulated a remarkably good stock of poetry in the last two centuries or so, and a fallow, or a cessation of manufacture, was not undesirable. Prose, on the other hand, had never been got into proper order in the vernaculars; and it was urgently desirable that it should be so got. The very precepts of the classical creed which were most mischievous in poetry were sovereign for prose. Here also they might hinder the development of eccentric excellence; but it was not eccentric excellence that was wanted. Unjust things have been said about the poetry of the Augustan ages; just things may be said against the criticism which mainly controlled that poetry. But it is hardly excessive to say that every precept—not purely metrical—contained in the *Arts* of Boileau and of Pope, is just and true for Prose. You may fly in the face of almost every one of these precepts and be the better poet for it; fly in the face of almost any one of them in prose, and you must have extraordinary genius if you do not rue it.

Even as to poetry itself some defence may be made. This poetry needed these rules; or rather, to speak more critically, these rules expressed the spirit of this poetry. The later and weaker metaphysicals in England, and fantasts in France, the Marinists and Gongorists in Spain and Italy, had shown what happens when *Furor* [*vere*] *Poeticus* ceases to ply the oars, and Good Sense has not come to take the helm. It is pretty certain that if this criticism had not ruled we should not have had good

or great Romantic poetry; we should at best have had (to take England) a few more Dyers and Lady Winchelseas. But if it had not ruled we should have had a less perfect Pope and less presentable minorities of this kind, and have been by no means consoled by a supply of eighteenth-century Clevelands. Once more, the period has the criticism that it wants, the criticism that will enable it to give us its own good things at their own best, and to keep off things which must almost certainly have been bad.

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BOOK VI

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ORTHODOXY

"*Voilà un tableau poétique aussi neuf, et produit par un enthousiasme aussi vif qu'il soit possible. . . . Il étoit bien aisé, même à de grands poëtes, de ne le pas trouver.*"—FONTENELLE.

CHAPTER I.

FROM ADDISON TO JOHNSON.

CRITICISM AT DRYDEN'S DEATH—BYSSHE'S 'ART OF ENGLISH POETRY'—GILDON—WELSTED—DENNIS—ON RYMER—ON SHAKESPEARE—ON "MACHINES"—HIS GENERAL THEORY OF POETRY—ADDISON—THE 'ACCOUNT OF THE BEST KNOWN ENGLISH POETS'—THE 'SPECTATOR' CRITICISMS—ON TRUE AND FALSE WIT—ON TRAGEDY—ON MILTON—THE "PLEASURES OF THE IMAGINATION"—HIS GENERAL CRITICAL VALUE—STEELE—ATTERBURY—SWIFT—'THE BATTLE OF THE BOOKS'—THE 'TALE OF A TUB'—MINOR WORKS—POPE—THE 'LETTERS'—THE SHAKESPEARE PREFACE—SPENCE'S 'ANECDOTES'—THE 'ESSAY ON CRITICISM'—THE 'EPISTLE TO AUGUSTUS'—REMARKS ON POPE AS A CRITIC, AND THE CRITICAL ATTITUDE OF HIS GROUP—PHILOSOPHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL CRITICS—TRAPP—BLAIR—THE 'LECTURES ON RHETORIC'—THE 'DISSERTATION ON OSSIAN'—KAMES—THE 'ELEMENTS OF CRITICISM'—CAMPBELL—THE 'PHILOSOPHY OF RHETORIC'—HARRIS—THE 'PHILOLOGICAL ENQUIRIES'—"ESTIMATE" BROWN: HIS 'HISTORY OF POETRY'—JOHNSON: HIS PREPARATION FOR CRITICISM—'THE RAMBLER' ON MILTON—ON SPENSER—ON HISTORY AND LETTER-WRITING—ON TRAGI-COMEDY—"DICK MINIM"—'RASSELAS'—THE SHAKESPEARE PREFACE—THE 'LIVES OF THE POETS'—THEIR GENERAL MERITS—THE 'COWLEY'—THE 'MILTON'—THE 'DRYDEN' AND 'POPE'—THE 'COLLINS' AND 'GRAY'—THE CRITICAL GREATNESS OF THE 'LIVES' AND OF JOHNSON—MINOR CRITICISM: PERIODICAL AND OTHER—GOLDSMITH—VICESIMUS KNOX—SCOTT OF AMWELL.

THE death of Dryden punctuates, with an exactness not often attainable in literary history, the division between seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature in England.[1] In general letters

[1] An interesting monograph on our subject, before and after 1700, is Herr Paul Hamelius's *Die Kritik in der Engl. Literatur des* 17 *und* 18 *Jahrhunderts* (Leipsic, 1897). I was able, as I always prefer to do, to postpone the reading of this till I had finished the English part of this volume, and I do not think I owe Herr Hamelius much. I am all the more glad to find that we agree on the Romantic element in Dryden (though not as to that in Dennis), and as to reducing the importance of French influence in England.

it is succeeded—not at all immediately—by the great school of Queen Anne men. In criticism[1] one of the greatest of these, a special pupil of Dryden, takes up the running at this interval, and others a little later; but the succession is steadily maintained. Dennis, an unhappily belated person, continues his exercitations; but has very much the worse fortune, critical as well as pecuniary, in his later days. And in the very year of the death there appears an egregious work—extremely popular, maleficently powerful beyond all doubt throughout the eighteenth century, and now chiefly known to non-experts in our days by the humorous contradiction which gave its author's name to Shelley, and by the chance which made a literary connection, towards the very end of its period of influence, between three such extraordinarily assorted persons as Afra Behn, Bysshe himself, and William Blake.[2]

Criticism at Dryden's death.

Edward Bysshe's *Art of English Poetry*[3] puts the eighteenth-century theory of this art with a rigour and completeness which can only be attributed either to something like genius, or to a wonderful and complete absence of it. His *Rules for Making English Verse* are the first part of the book in order, but much the least in bulk. Then follow, first a collection of "the most natural and sublime thoughts of the best English poets," or, in other words, an anthology, reasoned under headings, from poets of the seven-

Bysshe's Art of English Poetry.

[1] The excessively rare *Parliament of Critics* (London, 1702), a copy of which has been kindly lent me by Mr Gregory Smith, is more of what it calls itself, a "banter," than of a serious composition. But it connects itself not obscurely with the Collier quarrel.

[2] See Mr Swinburne's *William Blake*, p. 130 note, for the *sortes Bysshianæ* of Blake and his wife.

[3] My copy is the Third Edition, "with large improvements," London, 1708. Some put the first at 1702, not 1700. Before Bysshe, Joshua Poole, a schoolmaster, had given posthumously (1657: I have ed. 2, London, 1677), with a short dedication and a curious verse proem of his own, and an *Institution* signed J. D., *The English Parnassus*. This contains a double gradus of epithets and passages (the authors named only in a general list), an "Alphabet of [Rhyming] Monosyllables," and some "Forms of Compliment," &c. The *Institution* stoutly defends "Rhythm" [*i.e.*, rhyme], notices Sidney, Daniel, Puttenham, &c., shortly defines Kinds, objects to excessive enjambment (note the time, 1657) and to polysyllables, but is sensible if rather general and scrappy.

teenth century, extending to about four hundred and fifty pages; and last a Dictionary of Rhymes. The "best English poets" may be useful to give in a note.[1] The Dictionary is preceded by a few prefatory remarks, including one important historically, "Rhyme is *by all* allowed to be the chief ornament of versification in the modern languages." The killing frost which had fallen on the flowers of Elizabethan poetry had killed one weed at any rate—the craze against rhyme.

The Rules are preceded by a partly apologetic Preface, which disclaims any wish to furnish tools to poetasters, and puts the work "under the awful guard of the immortal Shakespeare, Milton [note that this was before Addison's critique], Dryden, &c." The keynote is struck, in the very first sentence of the text, with that uncompromisingness which makes one rather admire Bysshe. "The Structure of our verses, whether blank or in rhyme, consists *in a certain number of syllables; not* in feet composed of long and short syllables, as the verse of the Greeks and Romans." And he adds that, though some ingenious persons formerly puzzled themselves in prescribing rules for the quantity of English syllables, and composed verses by the measure of dactyls and spondees, yet that design is now wholly exploded. In other words, he cannot conceive classical feet without classical arrangement of feet.

"Our poetry admits, for the most part, of but three sorts of verses, those of 10, 8, and 7 syllables. Those of 4, 6, 9, 11, 12, and 14 are generally employed in masks and operas." But 12 and 14 may be used in Heroic verse with grace. Accent must be observed; and the Pause *must be* at or near the middle, though in Heroics it may be at the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, or 7th syllable, determined by the seat of the accent. Still, pauses at the 3rd and 7th must be used sparingly. The 2nd and 8th "can produce no true harmony"; and he seems to have refused

[1] Addison, Atterbury, Beaumont and Fletcher, Afra Behn, Blackmore, Tom Brown, Buckingham, Cleveland, Congreve, Cowley, Creech, Davenant (2), Denham, Dennis, Dorset, Dryden, Duke, Garth, Halifax, Harvey, Sir R. Howard, *Hudibras*, Jonson, Lee, Milton, Mulgrave, Oldham, Otway, Prior, Ratcliff, Rochester, Roscommon, Rowe, Sedley, Shakespeare, Southern, Sprat, Stafford, Stepney, Suckling, Tate, Walsh, Waller, Wycherley, and Yalden. Observe that no non-dramatic poet earlier than Cowley is admitted.

to contemplate anything so awful as a pause at the 1st or 9th. After decasyllables, octosyllables are commonest. As for lines of 9 and 11 syllables, "with the accent on the last [*i.e.*, anapæstic measures], the disagreeableness of their measure has wholly excluded them from serious subjects." The refining effected since the days of Chaucer, Spenser, and other ancient poets consists especially in the avoidance of the concourse of vowels and in the rigid elision of the article, the contraction of preterperfect tenses ("amaz'd," not "amazed"), the rejection of alliteration (an instance in Dryden is apologised for), of splitting words closely connected at the end of a verse, and of polysyllables.

And a very large number of minute rules follow, the one guiding principle of which is to reduce every line to its syllabic minimum, never allowing trisyllabic substitution.

The book, base and mechanical as it may seem, is of the first historical importance. It will be seen, even from these few extracts, that the excellent Bysshe has no doubts, no half-lights. The idea, which we have seen crystallising for a century and a half, that English poetry is as strictly and inexorably syllabic as French, and much more so than Greek or Latin, is here put in its baldest crudity. Bysshe will have no feet at all: and no other division within the line but at the pause, which is to be as centripetal as possible, like the French cæsura. It follows from this that, except the feminine or double ending, which is allowed ostensibly as a grace to rhymes, though also in blank verse, nothing extra to the ten, the eight, or whatever the line-norm may be, is permitted on any account. Articles, prepositions that will stand it, pronouns, are to be rigidly elided; weak or short syllables in the interior of words must be slurred out. There is (only that Bysshe will not have even the name of foot) no room for a trisyllabic foot anywhere, in what he equally refuses to call iambic or trochaic verse.

But what is more startling still is that trisyllabic feet disappear, not merely from the octosyllable and the heroic, but from English prosody, or are admitted only to "Compositions for Musick and the lowest sort of burlesque." Dryden might have written, "After the pangs of a desperate lover"; Prior

might be writing "Dear Chloe, how blubbered is that pretty face": but Bysshe sternly averts *his* face from them.

Now, if this astonishing impoverishment of English poetry had been the isolated crotchet of a pedant or a poetaster, it would at most deserve notice in a note. But it was nothing of the kind. "He," this insignificant person, "said it": they went and did it. It expressed the actual poetic practice of serious poets from Pope to Goldsmith: and it expressed the deliberate theoretic creed of such a critic as Johnson. The contrary practice of the great old poets was at best a "licence," at worst a "fault." What had actually happened to French—that it had been reduced to the iamb—what Gascoigne had lamented and protested against, long before, was here threatened—or rather, with bland ignoring, even of threat, laid down—as the unquestioned and unquestionable law of English. The whole eighteenth century did not, indeed, go the entire length of Bysshe. Prior—it is his everlasting glory in English poetical history—took care of that, and not only saved anapæstic cadence for us, but made it more popular than ever. But the eighteenth century continued, charmingly as it wrote them, to be a little ashamed of its anapæsts, to write them affectedly as a relaxation, if not even a derogation—to indulge in them (just as it might indulge in leap-frog with wig and long-skirted coat laid aside) avowedly for a frolic. And about the decasyllable — not quite so rigidly about the octosyllable—it accepted Bysshe almost without a protest. All the infinite variety of true English prosody, all the gliding or melting trochees, all the passion and throb which trisyllabic feet give to iambic verse, were sacrificed, all freedom of pause was relinquished, and the decasyllable tramped, the octosyllable tripped, as regularly and as monotonously as a High Dutch grenadier or a Low Dutch clock.

Bysshe had been frankly formal; it is not a small merit in him that he knew what he had to do and did it: but persons who were little if at all above him in taste or in intellect affected to despise him for this, and Mr Charles Gildon in his *Complete Art of Poetry*,[1] published a few

Gildon.

[1] London, 1718.

years later, is very high and mighty with Bysshe. As for himself he does not think that Poetry consists even in "colouring," but in Design: and he hashes up his French originals into some would-be módish dialogues, in which ladies of fashion attack and defend poetry on the old lines, before he comes to minuter recommendations. These differ chiefly from Bysshe's in that they are wordier, less peremptory, and given to substitute the vágueness of the journalist for the precision of the schoolmaster. Nor was this by any means Gildon's only contribution to criticism. Among the others perhaps the most interesting is an anonymous and undated, but apparently not doubtful, *rifacimento* of Langbaine,[1] which is curious as an example of *peine du talion*. Gildon (who has employed his own or some other "careful hand" to give himself an ingeniously, because not extravagantly, complimentary notice in the Appendix) serves Langbaine in Langbaine's own fashion; and, not contented with reversing his judgments, indulges freely in such phrases as "Mr Langbain mistakes," "those scurrilous and digressory remarks with which Mr Langbain has bespattered him [Dryden]," &c. The book is in the main bibliographic and biographic rather than critical.

Welsted.

A name which has something to do with criticism, and which associates itself naturally with those of Dennis and Gildon in the regiment of Pope's victims, is that of Leonard Welsted, who in 1712 published a translation of Longinus, "with some remarks on the English Poets." Welsted's translation, whether made directly from the Greek or not,[2] is readable enough, and his alternative title, "A treatise on *the Sovereign Perfection of Writing*," is not unhappy. Neither are his Preface and his appended "Remarks" contemptible. He can appreciate not merely Milton but Spenser; is (how unlike Rymer!) transported with *Othello*, and

[1] The *Lives and Characters of the English Dramatic Poets*, &c., *First begun by Mr Langbain, improved and continued down to this time by a Careful Hand* (London, printed for Tho. Leigh, &c. No date in my copy, but the *Dict. Nat. Biog.* gives 1699).

[2] I hope the passing suspicion is not illiberal. But why should he call the Palmyrene "Zenob*ie*" in English? *Cela sent furieusement son Français.* (For the critical work of yet another who felt the lash of Pope—James Ralph—*v. inf.*, p. 554 note.)

especially with its conclusion; and if he is not superior to others in scorning "Latin rhymes," at least has sufficient independence to be very irreverent to Buchanan.

But there was a contemporary of Bysshe's, more famous than either Gildon or Welsted, whose soul was equally above mere prosodic precept, and to whom, as it happens, Gildon himself pays a compliment, as to a denizen of Grub Street, of whom Grub Street could not but feel that he did it some honour by herding with its more native and genuine population. Of him we must say something — not, as we might almost have said it, in juxtaposition with the great poet and critic whom he had earlier admired, but before coming to the lesser, but still great, successors of Dryden, with whom he came into collision in his evil days.

Dennis.

If John Dennis had been acquainted with the poetry of Tennyson (at which he would probably have railed in his best manner, in which he would certainly have detected plagiarisms from the classics), he too might have applied to himself the words of Ulysses, "I am become a name." Everybody who has the very slightest knowledge of English literature knows, if only in connection with Dryden, Addison, and Pope, the surly, narrow, but not quite ignorant or incompetent critic, who in his younger and more genial days admired the first, and in his soured old age attacked the second and third. But it may be doubted whether very many persons have an acquaintance, at all extensive, with his works. They were never collected; the *Select Works of John Dennis*[1] mainly consist of his utterly worthless verse. Much of the criticism is hidden away in prefaces which were seldom reprinted, and the original editions of which have become very rare. Even good libraries frequently contain only two or three out of more than a dozen or a score of separate documents: and though the British Museum itself is well furnished, it is necessary to range through a large number of publications to obtain a complete view of Dennis as a critic.

That view, when obtained, may perhaps differ not a little from those which have, in a certain general way, succeeded each

[1] 2 vols., London, 1718.

other in current literary judgment. During the reign of Pope and Addison, the scurrilous assailant of the first, and the more courteous but in part severe censor of the second, was naturally regarded as at best a grumbling pedant, at worst a worthless Zoilus. The critics of the Romantic school were not likely to be much attracted by Dennis. More recently, something of a reaction has taken place in his favour; and it has become not unusual to discover in him, if not exactly a Longinus or a Coleridge, yet a serious and well-equipped critic, who actually anticipated not a little that after-criticism has had to say.[1]

On Rymer.

That this more charitable view is not entirely without foundation may be at once admitted. As compared with Rymer, in whose company he too often finds himself in modern appreciation, Dennis shows, indeed, pretty well. He very seldom—perhaps nowhere—exhibits that crass insensibility to poetry which distinguishes "the worst critic who ever lived." One of his earliest and not his worst pieces, *The Impartial Critic* of 1693, is an answer to Rymer himself, points out with acuteness and vigour that "Tom the Second" would ruin the English stage if he had his way, and even approaches the sole causeway of criticism across the deep by advancing the argument that the circumstances of the Greek drama were perfectly different from those of the English.[2] Yet already there are danger-signals. That the piece (which includes a Letter to a Friend and some dialogues) contains a great deal of clumsy jocularity, does not much matter. But when we find Dennis devoting some of this jocularity to Antigone's lamentation over her death unwedded, we feel sadly that the man who can write thus is scarcely to be trusted on the spirit of poetry. And the admission that Rymer's censures of Shakespeare are "in most of the particulars very sensible and just" is practically ruinous.[3]

[1] See, among others, Herr Hamelius, *op. cit.* Yet it is interesting to find that the passage of Dennis to which his panegyrist gives the single and signal honour of extract in an appendix is purely ethical: it is all on "the previous question."

[2] Had Dryden let his Cambridge admirer see the *Heads*? (*v. supra*, pp. 373, 397 notes.)

[3] Although Dennis's fun is heavy enough, there are some interesting touches, as this: "Port [then a novelty in England, remember] is not so well tasted as Claret: and intoxicates sooner."

Dennis's answer to Collier is a little later,[1] but still earlier than most of his better known work; and it is very characteristic of his manner, which has not often, I think, been exactly described. As elsewhere, so in this tract, which is entitled *The Usefulness of the Stage to the Happiness of Mankind, to Government and to Religion*, Dennis is uncompromisingly ethical; but he had here the excuse that Collier, to whom he was replying, had taken the same line. There is less, either here or elsewhere, for his method. This is to make a loud clatter of assertions, arranged in a kind of pseudological order, which seems to have really deceived the author, and may possibly have deceived some of his readers, into believing it syllogistic and conclusive. Dennis is very great at the word "must." "As Poetry is an Art it *must* be an imitation of nature"[2] and so forth; seldom shall you find so many "musts" anywhere as in Dennis, save perhaps in some of his modern analogues. Like all who argue in this fashion, he becomes unable to distinguish fact and his own opinion. Collier, for instance, had quoted (quite correctly) Seneca's denunciation of the Stage. To which Dennis replies, "It is not likely that Seneca should condemn the drama, . . . since . . . he wrote plays himself." That the identity of the philosopher and the dramatist is not certain does not matter: the characteristic thing is the setting of probability against fact. But with Dennis hectoring assertion is everything. "It cannot possibly be conceived that so reasonable a diversion as the drama can encourage or incline men to so unreasonable a one as gaming or so brutal a one as drunkenness." With a man who thinks this an argument, argument is impossible.

The fact is that, though he has, as has been admitted, a certain advantage over Rymer, Lord Derby's observation that "He

[1] It appeared in the very year of the *Short View* (1698). I have a reprint of it, issued many years later (1725), but long before Dennis's death, together with *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry* and the tragedy of *Rinaldo and Armida*, all separately titled, but continuously paged.

[2] This is from the *Advancement and Reformation*, which contains its author's full definition of Poetry itself—not the worst of such definitions. "Poetry is an Imitation of Nature by a pathetic and numerous speech."

never knew whether it was John or Thomas who answered the bell" will too often apply here. Rymer himself was not ignorant; Dennis, especially in regard to ancient criticism, was still better instructed: and though both were bad dramatists, with, in consequence, a conscious or unconscious bias on dramatic matters, Dennis was not so bad as Rymer. His devotion to Dryden does him credit, though we may suspect that it was not the best part of Dryden that he liked: and, amid the almost frantic spite and scurrility of his later attacks on Pope, he not unfrequently hits a weak place in the "young squab short gentleman's" bright but not invulnerable armour. Yet Dennis displays, as no really good critic could do, the weaknesses of his time and school both in generals and particulars. It is perfectly fair to compare him (giving weight for genius of course) with Johnson, a critic whose general views (except on port and claret) did not materially differ from his own. And, if we do so, we shall find that while Johnson is generally, if not invariably, "too good for such a breed," Dennis almost as constantly shows its worst features. He altered *The Merry Wives of Windsor* into *The Comical Gallant*[1]—a most illaudable action certainly, yet great Dryden's self had done such things before. But he aggravated the crime by a preface, in which he finds fault with the original as having "no less than three actions" [would there were thirty-three!] by remarking that, in the second part of *Henry the Fourth*, Falstaff "does nothing but talk" [would he had talked so for five hundred acts instead of five!] and by laying down *ex cathedra* such generalities as that "Humour, not wit, is the business of comedy," a statement as false as would be its converse. In his *Essay on the Genius of Shakespeare*[2] he is not so very far from Rymer himself in the drivelling arbitrariness of his criticism. Shakespeare has actually made Aufidius, the general of the Volscians, a base and profligate villain! Even Coriolanus himself is allowed to be called a traitor by Aufidius, and nobody contradicts! The rabble in *Julius Cæsar* and other such things "show want of Art," and there is a painful disregard of Poetical Justice. The same hopeless wrong-headedness and (if

On Shakespeare.

[1] London, 1702. [2] London, 1712.

I may so say) wrong-mindedness, appear in a very different work, the *Remarks on the Rape of the Lock*.[1] I do not refer to Dennis's mere scurrilities about "AP—E" and the like. But part of the piece is quite serious criticism. Few of us in modern times care much for the "machinery" of this brilliantly artificial poem; but fewer would think of objecting to it on Dennis's grounds. Machines, it seems, must be—

On "Machines."

i. Taken from the religion of the Poet's country.
ii. Allegorical in their application.
iii. Corresponding though opposed to each other.
iv. Justly subordinated and proportioned.

And Pope's machines, we are told, fail in all these respects.

Now, putting the fourth ground aside as being a mere matter of opinion (and some who are not fervent Papists think the machines of the *Rape* very prettily and cleverly arranged in their puppet-show way), one may ask Dennis "Who on earth told you so?" in respect of all the others. And if he alleged (as he might) this or that sixteenth or seventeenth century authority, "And who on earth told *him* so? and what authority had the authority? Why should machines be taken only from the religion of the country? Why should they be allegorical? Why should Machine Dick on the one side invariably nod to Machine Harry on the other?" And even if some sort of answer be forthcoming, "Why should the poet not do as he please if he succeeds thereby in giving the poetic pleasure?" To which last query of course neither Dennis nor any of his school could return any answer, except of the kind that requires bell, book, and candle.

Nor would he have hesitated to use this, for he is a rule-critic of the very straitest kind, a "Tantivy" of poetic Divine Right. In his three chief books of abstract criticism[2] he endeavours to elaborate, with Longinus in part for code, and with Milton for example, a noble, indeed, and creditable, but utterly arbitrary and hopelessly

His general theory of Poetry.

[1] London, 1728.

[2] *The Advancement and Reformation of Poetry*, 1701; *A Large Account of the Taste in Poetry*, next year; and *Grounds of Criticism in Poetry*, 1704.

narrow theory of poetry as *necessarily* religious, and as having for its sole real end the reformation of the mind, by a sort of enlarged Aristotelian *katharsis* as to spirit, and by attention to the strict laws of the art in form. Poetical Justice was a sort of mediate divinity to Dennis: as we have seen, he upbraided Shakespeare for the want of it; he remonstrated, in the *Spectator*, No. 548, and elsewhere, with Addison for taking too little account of it; part at least of his enthusiasm for Milton comes from Milton's avowed intention to make his poem a theodicy.

A noble error! let it be repeated, with no hint or shadow of sarcasm or of irreverence; but a fatal error as well. That Poetry, like all things human, lives and moves and has its being in God, the present writer believes as fervently and unhesitatingly as any Platonic philosopher or any Patristic theologian; and he would cheerfully incur the wrath of Savonarola by applying the epithet "divine," in its fullest meaning, not merely to tragedy and epic and hymn, but to song of wine and of love. But this is not what Dennis meant at all. He meant that Poetry is to have a definitely religious, definitely moral *purpose*—not that it is and tends of itself necessarily *ad majorem Dei gloriam*, but that we are to shape it according to what our theological and ethical ideas of the glory of God are. This way easily comes bad poetry, not at all easily good; and it excludes poetic varieties which may be as good as the best written in obedience to it, and better. Moreover, putting Dennis's notion of the end of Poetry together with his notion of its method or art (which latter is to be adjusted to some at least of the straitest classical precepts), we can easily comprehend, and could easily have anticipated, the narrow intolerance and the hectoring pedantry which he shows towards all who follow not him. In a new sense—not so very different from the old mediæval one, though put with no mediæval glamour, and by an exponent full of eighteenth-century prosaism, yet destitute of eighteenth-century neatness and concinnity—Poetry becomes a part of theology; and the mere irritableness of the man of letters is aggravated into the *odium theologicum*. Bad poets (that is to say, bad according to

Dennis) are not merely faulty artists but wicked men; of this Dennis is sure. "And when a man is sure," as he himself somewhere naïvely observes, "'tis his duty to speak with a modest assurance." We know, from examples more recent than poor Dennis, that, when a man is thus minded, his assurance is very apt to eat up his modesty, taking his charity, his good manners, and some other things, as condiments to the meal.

Addison.

Dennis and Addison, though the latter did not escape the absolute impartiality of the former's carping, were on terms of mutual respect which, considering all things, were creditable to both. During the latter part of his rather short lifetime Addison, it is hardly necessary to say, enjoyed a sort of mild dictatorship in Criticism as in other departments of literature; and his right to it was scarcely disputed till near the close of the century, though Johnson knew that he was not deep, and tells us that, in his own last days, it was almost a fashion to look down on Addisonian criticism. If, like others, he was displaced by the Romantic revival, he received more lenient treatment than some, in virtue partly of his own general moderation, partly of his championship of Milton. Yet while his original literary gifts recovered high place during the nineteenth century, his criticism has often been considered to possess scarcely more than historic interest, and has sometimes been rather roughly handled—for instance, by Mr Matthew Arnold. But a recent writer,[1] by arguing that Addison's treatment of the Imagination, as a separate faculty, introduced a new principle into criticism, has at any rate claimed for him a position which, if it could be granted, would seat him among the very greatest masters of the art, with Aristotle and Longinus among his own forerunners. As usual let us, before discussing these various estimates, see what Addison actually did as a critic.[2]

His *début* as such was not fortunate. He was, it is true, only

[1] Mr W. Basil Worsfold in his *Principles of Criticism* (London, 1897). I hope that nothing which, in a politely controversial tone, I may have to say here, will be taken as disparagement of a very interesting and valuable essay.

[2] The most convenient edition of Addison's *Works* is that of Bohn, with Hurd's editorial matter and a good deal more (London, 6 vols., 1862).

three-and-twenty when at "dearest Harry's" request (that is to say Mr Harry Sacheverell's) he undertook an *Account of the greatest English Poets*.[1] In 1694 nobody, except Dryden, could be expected to write very good verse, so that the poetical qualities of this verse-essay need not be hardly dwelt upon, or indeed considered at all. We may take it, as if it were prose, for the matter only. And thus considered, it must surely be thought one of the worst examples of the pert and tasteless ignorance of its school. Before Cowley nobody but Chaucer and Spenser is mentioned at all, and the mentions of these are simply grotesque. The lines convict Addison, almost beyond appeal, of being at the time utterly ignorant of English literary history up to 1600, and of having read Chaucer and Spenser themselves, if he had read them at all, with his eyes shut. The Chaucer section reads as if it were describing *A C. Merry Tales* or the *Jests of George Peele*. Where Dryden, if he did not understand Chaucer's versification, and missed some of his poetry, could see much even of that, and almost all the humour, the grace, the sweetness, the "God's plenty" of life and character that Chaucer has, Addison sees nothing but a merry-andrew of the day before yesterday.[2] So, too, the consummate art of Spenser, his exquisite versification, his great ethical purpose, and yet his voluptuous beauty, are quite hidden from Addison. He sees nothing but a tedious allegory of improbable adventures, and objects to the "dull moral" which "lies too plain below," much as Temple had done before him.[3] Cowley, Milton, and Waller are mentioned next, in at least asserted chronological order. Cowley is "a mighty genius" full of beauties and faults,

The Account of the Best known English Poets.

"Who more had pleased us had he pleased us less,"

[1] It is fair to say that he never published this, and that, as Pope told Spence, he used himself to call it "a poor thing," and admitted that he spoke of some of the poets only "on hearsay." Now when Pope speaks to Addison's credit it is not as "what the soldier said." It *is* evidence, and of the strongest.

[2] "In vain he jests in his unpolished strain,
And tries to make his readers laugh in vain."

[3] "His moral lay so bare that it lost the effect" (*Ess. on Po.*, iii. 420, *ed. cit. sup.*) Indeed it has been suggested that Addison's debt to Temple here is not confined to this.

but who is a perfect "milky way" of brilliancy, and has made Pindar himself "take a nobler flight." Milton alternately strikes Addison with awe, rapture, and shock at his politics. He

"Betrays a bottom odious to the sight."

So we turn to Waller, who is not only "courtly" but "moves our passion," (what a pity that he died too soon to "rehearse Maria's charms"!) to Roscommon, who "makes even rules a noble poetry," and Denham, whose Cooper's Hill "we must," of course, not "forget." "Great Dryden" is then, not unhappily, though not quite adequately, celebrated, and the line on his Muse—

"She wears all dresses, and she charms in all,"

is not only neat, but very largely true. When Dryden shall decay, luckily there is harmonious Congreve: and, if Addison were not tired with rhyming, he would praise (he does so at some length) noble Montague, who directs his artful muse to Dorset,

"In numbers such as Dorset's self might use,"—

as to which all that can be said is that, if so, either the verses of Montague or the verses of Dorset referred to are not those that have come down to us under the names of the respective authors.

To dwell at all severely on this luckless production of a young University wit would be not only unkind but uncritical. It shows that at this time Addison knew next to nothing[1] about the English literature not of his own day, and judged very badly of what he pretended to know.

The prose works of his middle period, the *Discourse on Medals* and the *Remarks on Italy*, are very fully illustrated from the Latin poets—the division of literature that Addison knew best—but indulge hardly at all in literary criticism. It was not till the launching of the *Tatler*, by Steele and Swift, provided him with his natural medium of utterance, that

[1] He proposes to give an account of "*all* the Muse possessed" between Chaucer and Dryden; and, as a matter of fact, mentions nobody but Spenser between Chaucer and Cowley.

Addison became critical. This periodical itself, and the less known ones that followed the *Spectator*, all contain exercises in this character: but it is to the *Spectator* that men look, and look rightly, for Addison's credentials in the character of a critic. The *Tatler* Essays, such as the rather well known papers on Tom Folio and Ned Softly, those in the *Guardian*, the good-natured puff of Tom D'Urfey, &c., are not so much serious and deliberate literary criticisms, as applications, to subjects more or less literary, of the peculiar method of gently malicious censorship, of laughing castigation in manners and morals, which Addison carried to such perfection in all the middle relations of life. Not only are the *Spectator* articles far more numerous and far more weighty, but we have his own authority for regarding them as, in some measure at least, written on a deliberate system, and divisible into three groups. The first of these groups consists of the early papers on True and False Wit, and of essays on the stage. The second contains the famous and elaborate criticism of Milton with other things; and the third, the still later, still more serious, and still more ambitious, series on the Pleasures of the Imagination. Addison is looking back from the beginning of this last when he gives the general description,[1] and it is quite possible that the complete trilogy was not in his mind when he began the first group. But there is regular development in it, and whether we agree or not with Mr Worsfold's extremely high estimate of the third division, it is quite certain that the whole collection—of some thirty or forty essays—does clearly exhibit that increasing sense of what criticism means, which is to be observed in almost all good critics. For criticism is, on the one hand, an art in which there are so few manuals or trustworthy short summaries—it is one which depends so much more on reading and knowledge than any creative art—and, above all, it is necessary to make so many mistakes in it before one comes right, that,

The Spectator criticisms.

[1] In the last paragraph of *Sp.* 409. The whole paper has been occupied by thoughts on Taste and Criticism: it contains the excellent comparison of a critic to a tea-taster, and it ends with this retrospect, and the promise of the "Imagination" Essays (*v. ed. cit.*, iii. 393).

probably, not one single example can be found of a critic of importance who was not a much better critic when he left off than when he began.

On True and False Wit.

In Group One[1] Addison is still animated by the slightly desultory spirit of moral satire, which has been referred to above; and, though fifteen or sixteen years have passed since the *Account*, he does not seem to be so entirely free as we might wish from the crude sciolism, if not the sheer ignorance, of the earliest period. He is often admirable: his own humour, his taste, almost perfect within its own narrow limits, and his good sense, made that certain beforehand. But he has rather overloaded it with somewhat artificial allegory, the ethical temper rather overpowers the literary, and there is not a little of that arbitrary "blackmarking" of certain literary things which is one of the worst faults of neo-classic criticism. The Temple of Dulness is built (of course) "after the Gothic manner," and the image of the god is dressed "after the habit of a monk." Among the idolatrous rites and implements are not merely rebuses, anagrams, verses arranged in artificial forms, and other things a little childish, though perfectly harmless, but acrostics—trifles, perhaps, yet trifles which can be made exquisitely graceful, and satisfying that desire for mixing passion with playfulness which is not the worst affection of the human heart.

On Tragedy.

He had led up to this batch, a few weeks earlier, by some cursory remarks on Comedy, which form the tail of a more elaborate examination of Tragedy, filling four or five numbers.[2] Readers who have already mastered the general drift of the criticism of the time before him, will scarcely need any long *précis* of his views, which, moreover, are in everybody's reach, and could not possibly be put more readably. Modern tragedies, he thinks, excel those of Greece and Rome in the intricacy and disposition of the fable, but fall short in the moral. He objects to rhyme (except an end-couplet or two), and, though he thinks the style of our tragedies superior to the sentiment, finds the former, especially in Shakespeare, defaced by "sounding phrases, hard metaphors,

[1] *Sp.* 58-63.

[2] *Sp.* 39, 40, 42, 44, 45.

and forced expressions." This is still more the case in Lee. Otway is very "tender": but it is a sad thing that the characters in *Venice Preserved* should be traitors and rebels. Poetic justice (this was what shocked Dennis), as generally understood, is rather absurd, and quite unnecessary. And the tragi-comedy, which is the product of the English theatre, is "one of the most monstrous inventions that ever entered into a poet's thought." You "might as well weave the adventures of Æneas and Hudibras into one poem" [and, indeed, one might find some relief in this, as far as the adventures of Æneas are concerned]. Tragedies are not even to have a double plot. Rants, and especially impious rants, are bad. Darkened stages, elaborate scenery and dresses, troops of supers, &c., are as bad: bells, ghosts, thunder, and lightning still worse. "Of all our methods of moving pity and terror, there is none so absurd and barbarous as the dreadful butchering of one another," though all deaths on the stage are not to be forbidden.

Now, it is not difficult to characterise the criticism which appears in this first group, strengthened, if anybody cares, by a few isolated examples. It contains a great deal of common sense and good ordinary taste; many of the things that it reprehends are really wrong, and most of what it praises is good in a way. But the critic has as yet no guiding theory, except what he thinks he has gathered from Aristotle, and has certainly gathered from Horace, *plus* Common Sense itself, with, as is the case with all English critics of this age, a good deal from his French predecessors, especially Le Bossu and Bouhours. Which borrowing, while it leads him into numerous minor errors, leads him into two great ones—his denunciations of tragi-comedy, and of the double plot. He is, moreover, essentially arbitrary: his criticism will seldom stand the application of the "Why?" the "*Après?*" and a harsh judge might, in some places, say that it is not more arbitrary than ignorant.

The Second Group,[1] or Miltonic batch, with which may be

[1] These began in *Sp.* 267, and were the regular Saturday feature of the paper for many weeks. References to Milton outside of them will be found in the excellent index of the ed. cit. or in that of Mr Gregory Smith's exact and elegant reproduction of the *Spectator* (8 vols., London, 1897).

taken its "moon," the partly playful but more largely serious *examen* of *Chevy Chase*, is much the best known, and has been generally ranked as the most important exhibition of Addison's critical powers. It is not, however, out of paradox or desire to be singular that it will be somewhat briefly discussed here. By the student of Addison it cannot be too carefully studied; for the historian of criticism it has indeed high importance, but importance which can be very briefly summed up, and which requires no extensive analysis of the eighteen distinct essays that compose the Miltonic group, or the two on *Chevy Chase*. The critic here takes for granted—and knows or assumes that his readers will grant—two general positions:—

On Milton.

1. The Aristotelian-Horatian view of poetry, with a few of the more commonplace utterances of Longinus, supplies the orthodox theory of Poetics.

2. The ancients, especially Homer and Virgil, supply the most perfect examples of the orthodox practice of poetry.

These things posed, he proceeds to examine *Chevy Chase* at some, *Paradise Lost* at great, length by their aid; and discovers in the ballad not a few, and in the epic very great and very numerous, excellences. As Homer does this, so Milton does that: such a passage in Virgil is a more or less exact analogue to such another in *Paradise Lost*. Aristotle says this, Horace that, Longinus the third thing; and you will find the dicta capitally exemplified in such and such a place of Milton's works. To men who accepted the principle—as most, if not all, men did—the demonstration was no doubt both interesting and satisfactory; and though it certainly did not start general admiration of Milton, it stamped that admiration with a comfortable seal of official orthodoxy. But it is actually more antiquated than Dryden, in assuming that the question whether Milton wrote according to Aristotle is coextensive with the question whether he wrote good poetry.

The next batch is far more important.

What *are* the Pleasures of the Imagination? It is of the first moment to observe Addison's exact definition.[1] Sight is

[1] *Sp.* 411, ed. cit., iii. 394.

the "sense which furnishes the imagination with its ideas; so that by the 'Pleasures of the Imagination' or Fancy, which I shall use promiscuously, I here mean such as arise from visible objects, either when we have them actually in our view, or when we call up their ideas into our minds by paintings, statues, descriptions, or any the like occasion." We can have no images not thus furnished, though they may be altered and compounded by imagination itself. To make this quite sure, he repeats that he means *only* such pleasures as thus arise. He then proceeds, at some length, to argue for the innocence and refinement of such pleasures, their usefulness, and so on; and further, to discuss the causes or origins of pleasure in sight, which he finds to be three—greatness, uncommonness, and beauty. The pleasantness of these is assigned to such and such wise and good purposes of the Creator, with a reference to the great modern discoveries of Mr Locke's essay.

The "Pleasures of the Imagination."

Addison then goes on to consider the sources of entertainment to the imagination, and decides that, for the purpose, art is very inferior to nature, though both rise in value as each borrows from the other. He adduces, in illustration, an odd rococo mixture of scene-painting and reflection of actual objects which he once saw (p. 404). Italian and French gardens are next praised, in opposition to the old formal English style, and naturally trained trees to the productions of the *ars topiaria;* while a very long digression is made to greatness in Architecture, illustrated by this remark (p. 409), "Let any one reflect on the disposition of mind in which he finds himself at his first entrance into the Pantheon at Rome, . . . and consider how little in proportion he is affected with the inside of a Gothic cathedral, though it be five times larger than the other," the reason being "the greatness of the manner in the one, and the meanness in the other."

So the "secondary" pleasures of the imagination—*i.e.*, those compounded and manufactured by memory—are illustrated by the arts of sculpture and painting, with a good passage on description generally, whence he turns to the Cartesian doctrine of the association of ideas, and shows very ingeniously how the

poet may avail himself of this. Next comes a curious and often just analysis of the reasons of pleasure in description—how, for instance, he likes Milton's Paradise better than his Hell, because brimstone and sulphur are not so refreshing to the imagination as beds of flowers and wildernesses of sweets. Or we may like things because they "raise a secret ferment in the mind," either directly, or so as to arouse a feeling of relief by comparison, as when we read of tortures, wounds, and deaths. Moreover, the poet may improve Nature. Let oranges grow wild, and roses, woodbines, and jessamines flower at the same time. As for "the fairy way of writing"[1]—that is to say, the supernatural—it requires a very odd turn of mind. We do it better than most other nations, because of our gloominess and melancholy of temper. Shakespeare excels everybody else in touching "this weak superstitious part" of his reader's imagination. The glorifying of the imagination, however, is by no means confined to the poet. In good historians we "see" everything. None more gratify the imagination than the authors of the new philosophy, astronomers, microscopists. This (No. 420) is one of Addison's most ambitious passages of writing, and the whole ends (421) with a peroration excellently hit off.

It is upon these papers mainly that Mr Worsfold[2] bases his high eulogium of Addison as "the first genuine critic," the first "who added something to the last word of Hellenism," the bringer of criticism "into line with modern thought," the establisher of "a new principle of poetic appeal." Let us, as uncontroversially as possible, and without laying any undue stress on the fact that Mr Worsfold practically omits Longinus altogether,[3] stick, in our humdrum way, to the facts.

In the first place, supposing for the moment that Addison uses "imagination" in our full modern sense, and supposing, secondly, for the moment also, that he assigns the appeal to the imagination as the special engine of the poet, is this an original discovery of his? By no means: there are many *loci* of former

[1] This phrase is originally Dryden's (dedication to *King Arthur*, viii. 136, ed. cit.), who, however, has "kind" for "way."

[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 93-107, and more largely pp. 55-93.

[3] Students of the Stagirite may be almost equally surprised to find Aristotle regarded as mainly, if not wholly, a critic of Form as opposed to Thought.

writers to negative this—there is one that is fatal. And this is no more recondite a thing than the famous Shakespearian description of

"The lunatic, the lover, and the poet,"

as

"Of *imagination* all compact,"

with what follows. But this is a mere question of property, plagiarism, suggestion; and such questions are at best the exercises of literary holiday-makers, at the worst the business of pedants and of fools.

A more important as well as a more dangerous question is this. *Does* Addison make "the appeal to the imagination" the test of poetry? It can only be answered that, by his own explicit words, he does nothing of the kind. If he advances anything, it is that the appeal to the imagination is the appeal of art generally—of prose (even of scientific) literary art as well as of poetry, of painting, sculpture, architecture, as well as of literature. In doing this he does a good thing: he does something notable in the history of general æsthetics; but in so far as literature, and especially poetry, is concerned, he scarcely goes as far as Longinus in the well-known passage,[1] though he works out his doctrine at much greater length, and with assistance from Descartes and Locke.

But the most important and the most damaging question of all is this, "Are not Addison and his panegyrist using words in equivocal senses? *Does* Imagination in Addison's mouth bear the meaning which we, chiefly since Coleridge's day, attach to the word? Does it even mean what it meant to Longinus, much more what it meant to Shakespeare?"

I have no hesitation in answering the two latter questions with an absolute and unhesitating "No!"

It seems indeed extraordinary that, in face of Addison's most careful and explicit limitations, any one should delude himself into thinking that even the Shakespearian and Addisonian Imaginations are identical—much more that Addison's Imagination is the supreme faculty, creative, transcending

[1] See vol. i. p. 165 *sq.*

Fancy,[1] superior to fact, not merely compounding and refining upon, but altogether superseding and almost scorning, ideas of sensation, which we mean by the word, and which Philostratus or Apollonius[2] partly glimpsed. Addison tells us—tells us over and over again—that *all* the ideas and pleasures of the imagination are pleasures of sense, and, what is more, that they are all pleasures of one sense—Sight. Why he should have limited himself in this singular manner it is hard to say; except that he was evidently full of Locke when he wrote, and, indeed, almost entirely under the influence of the *Essay*. That he had a contempt for music is elsewhere pretty evident; and this probably explains his otherwise inexplicable omission of the supplies and assistance given to Imagination by Hearing. His morality, as well as old convention, excluded Touch, Taste, and Smell as low and gross, though no candid philosophy could help acknowledging the immense influence exercised upon Imagination by at least the first and the last—Taste, because the most definite, being perhaps the least imaginative of all. But the fact that he does exclude even these senses, and still more rigidly excludes everything but Sense, is insuperable, irremovable, ruthless. Addison may have been the first modern critic to work out the appeal of art to the pleasures and ideas furnished by the sense of sight. He is certainly nothing more.

His general critical value.

But is he therefore to be ignored, or treated lightly, because of this strange overvaluation of him? Certainly not. Though by no means a very great critic, he is a useful, an interesting, and a representative one. He represents the classical attitude tempered, not merely by good sense almost in quintessence, but by a large share of tolerance and positive good taste, by freedom from the more utterly ridiculous pseudo-Aristotelianisms, and by a wish to extend a *concordat* to everything good even if it be not "faultless." In his *Account* he is evidently too crude to be very censurable: in his first group of essays much of his censure is just. The elaborate vindication of Milton, though now and for a long

[1] It would be unfair to lay too much stress on his identification of Imagination and Fancy; but there is something tell-tale in it.

[2] See vol. i. p. 118 *sq.*

time past merely a curiosity, is again full of good sense, displays (if not altogether according to knowledge) a real liking for real poetic goodness, and had an inestimable effect in keeping at least one poet of the better time privileged and popular with readers throughout the Eighteenth Century. As for the essay on the Pleasures of the Imagination, the fact that it has been wrongly praised need not in the least interfere with a cordial estimate of its real merits. It is not an epoch-making contribution to literary criticism; it is rather one-sided, and strangely limited in range. But it is about the first attempt at a general theory of æsthetics in English; it is a most interesting, and a very early, example of that application of common-sense philosophy to abstract subjects which Locke taught to the English eighteenth century; and many of its remarks are valuable and correct. Moreover, it did actually serve, for those who could not, or who did not, read Longinus, as a corrective to pure form-criticism, to Bysshe with his rigid ten syllables, to bare good sense and conventional rule. Its Imagination was still only that which supplies Images, and was strangely cramped besides; but it was better than mere correctness, mere decency, mere stop-watch.

Between Addison and Pope, Steele, Atterbury, and Swift call for notice. Steele has little for us.[1] There are few things more curious than the almost entire abstinence from any expression, in the slightest degree really critical, to be found in the eulogy of Spenser, which he generously enough inserted in *Sp.* 540 to express "his passion for that charming author." The numerous friends whom he has so justly won for himself may perhaps insist that there is criticism of the best in this very phrase; and that the rather rash encomium on the poet's "old words" as being "all truly English" is balanced by the justice of the reference to his "exquisite numbers." But the fact is that Steele had neither the knowledge, nor the patience, nor the coolness for critical work.

Steele.

[1] Herr Hamelius, *op. cit. sup.*, p. 103, and elsewhere, thinks much more highly of Steele than I do, and even makes him a "Romantic before Romanticism." Steele's temperament was undoubtedly Romantic, and both in essays and plays he displayed it; but he was not really critical.

Atterbury.

Atterbury is more curious. He was himself a man of great intellectual power, a scholar, an eloquent and delicate writer, and possessed independent taste enough to admire Milton fervently at a time when Addison had not yet made it wholly orthodox to admire that poet at all, and when most Tories detested him. But his observations on Waller[1] are the very quintessence of pseudodoxy, as to that respectable person; and, by a curious combination, though Waller is a rhymer confirmed and complete, Atterbury joins with his admiration for him an antipathy to rhyme — "this jingling kind of poetry," "this troublesome bondage, as Mr Milton well calls it." As for this we need say little; the danger lay not there. But it lay in the direction of such remarks as that "English came into Waller's hands like a rough diamond; he polished it first," that, "for aught I know, he stands last as well as first in the list of refiners" [imagine the excellent Waller as be-all and end-all of English!], that "verse before Waller was "downright prose tagged with rhyme," &c., &c. Once more let our impatience of this talk not be ignorant—as is the impatience of those who nowadays cannot see music in Dryden, poetry in Pope, "cry" and clangour now and then even in persons like Langhorne and Mickle. He expressed an opinion; but in expressing it he showed this same ignorance from which we should abstain. Instead of pointing out that Waller introduced a *different* kind of music, he insisted that Waller substituted music for discord: instead of saying that he introduced a new fashion of cutting the diamond, he would have it that the diamond was merely rough before. This was the *culpa*, the *maxima culpa* of eighteenth-century criticism, and Atterbury illustrates and shares it.[2]

The critical work of Swift[3] is much more important, and

[1] In his Preface to the Second Part of the *Poems* (1690).

[2] Of course he might, to some extent, have sheltered himself under Dryden's own authority for all this.

[3] I have thought it useless to give references to particular editions of the better known writings of Swift and Pope, as they are so numerous. Of their whole works there is, in the former case, no real standard, Scott's being much inferior to his *Dryden;* but in the latter that of the late Mr Elwin and Mr *Courthope* is not likely soon to be superseded.

though a good deal of it is inextricably mixed up with the work of Pope and of Arbuthnot, the lion's claw is generally perceptible enough. The famous *Tatler* of September 28, 1710, on the conceptions of English style and writing, ought to hold place in every history and course of lectures on the subject, next to Sprat's passage in the *History of the Royal Society* forty years before, as the manifesto of a fresh stage in English style-criticism; and it practically precedes everything that Addison, Steele, and Pope published on, or in connection with, the subject. But long before this, in the wonderful volume which first (1704) revealed his genius to the world, Swift had shown how critical the Gods had made him.

Swift.

The Battle of the Books is one of the most eccentric documents in the whole History of our subject. Directly, and on its face, it may be said to be of the first critical importance; because it shows how very little subject, intention, accuracy to fact, verisimilitude, and half-a-dozen other indispensables according to certain theories, have to do with the goodness of a book. The general characteristics of *The Battle of the Books* in all these named respects, and some of the unnamed ones, are deplorable. In a tedious and idle quarrel which, at least as it was actually debated, never need have been debated at all, Swift takes the side which, if not the intrinsically wrong one, is the wrong one as he takes it. To represent Bentley, or even Wotton, as enemies of the Ancients might seem preposterous, if it were not outdone by the preposterousness of selecting Temple as their champion. The details are often absurd—from that ranking of "Despréaux" side by side with Cowley as a Modern brigadier, which is probably a slip (perhaps for "Desportes") of pen or press, to the spiteful injustices on Dryden. The idea of the piece was probably taken from Callières.[1] Its composition, from the rigid "Ancient" point of view, is sadly lax; and the two most brilliant episodes —the "Sweetness and Light" quarrel of the Spider and the Bee, and the "machine" of the Goddess of Criticism—have little or nothing to do with the action. But yet it is—and one knows it is—a masterpiece; and it is pretty certain from it that in

The Battle of the Books.

[1] *V. inf.*, p. 553 note.

certain kinds of destructive criticism, and even in certain kinds of what may be called destructive-constructive, the author will be able to accomplish almost anything that he is likely to try.

The Tale of a Tub.

Though the *Tale of a Tub* is less ostensibly bookish, it shows even greater purely critical power: for the power of the *Battle* is mainly that of a consummate craftsman, who can accomplish by sheer craftsmanship whatsoever his hand findeth to do. In the *Tale* the crusade against bad writing and bad writers, which Swift carried on more or less for the whole of his middle and later years, and in which he enlisted Addison and Pope, Arbuthnot and Gay, is all but formally proclaimed, and is most vigorously waged with or without proclamation. In the "Dedication to Somers" the sword is being something more than loosened in the sheath; it flashes out in "The Bookseller to the Reader"; it is doing sanguinary work in the great "Epistle to Prince Posterity"; and it has only momentary rests in the "Preface" and the "Induction": while there is hardly a section of the main text in which the quarters of Grub Street are not beaten up, and the Conclusion is even as the preludes and the main body.

Minor works.

A shrewd judge could hardly fail to perceive, from these famous twin-books, that a new genius of thoroughly critical character had arisen: but such a judge might well have doubted how far its exercise could be anything but negative. His doubts, as we have already hinted, were to be justified. Indirectly, indeed, not merely in the *Tatler* paper above referred to and elsewhere, but by that almost uncanny influence which he seems to have exerted in so many ways on men only less than himself, Swift had very much to do with the rescuing of Style, by the hands of Addison and the rest, from the ~~vul~~garisation which it was undergoing at the close of the seventeenth century, not merely in common writers, not merely in the hands of an eccentric like L'Estrange, but in those of scholars like Collier and Bentley. But even this was a task of destruction rather than of positive construction, and he was always most at home in such tasks. The *Meditation on a Broomstick* and the *Tritical Essay*, though every good reviewer should know them by heart, and will have but too many opportunities of using his knowledge, are delivered with the

backward, not the forward, speech of the critic; the *Proposal for correcting the English Tongue*, which falls in with the *Tatler* paper, aims at a sort of stationary state of language and literature alike, at proscriptions and ostracisings; the *Letter to a Young Clergyman* and the *Essay on Modern Education*, though both touch on literature, are exceedingly general in their precepts; and though all persons with a true English appreciation of shameless puns and utter nonsense must delight in *The Antiquity of the English Tongue*, it cannot be called serious criticism. There is more in the *Advice to a Young Poet:* but even here Swift is rather "running humours" on his subject than discussing it in the grave and chaste manner.

We shall therefore hardly be wrong if, after excepting the literary directions of the universal satiric *douche* in the *Tale of a Tub*, and the useful but somewhat rudimentary warnings of the *Tatler* paper, we see the most characteristic critical work of Swift in *Martinus Scriblerus* and the *Peri Bathous*, especially in the latter, which, though it be principally attributed to Arbuthnot and Pope, is as surely Swiftian in suggestion as if the Dean had written and published it alone. Often as it has been imitated, and largely as its methods have been drawn upon, it has never been surpassed as an Art of General and Particular "Slating": and the sections on the Figures, with the immortal receipt for making an epic poem (the full beauty of which is lost on those who do not know how appallingly close it is to the approved prescriptions of the best neo-classic critics), cannot be too highly praised. But, once more, the critic is here at hangman's work only: he allows himself neither to admire nor to love.

Pope.

These principles, put in various ways by writers of more or less genius for half a century, found what seemed to more than two generations (always with a few dissidents) something like consummate expression in certain well-known utterances of Pope. As expression these utterances may still receive a very high degree of admiration: as anything else it is difficult to believe that any turn of fashion, unless it brings with it oblivion for large districts of noble literature, can restore them to much authority. Pope, though better read than

he seems in his poems, was by no means a learned man; and it is now pretty generally admitted that his intellect was acute rather than powerful. The obstinate superficiality—the reduction of everything, even the most recondite problems of philosophy, even the most far-ranging questions of erudition, to a jury of "common-sense" persons, decorated with a little of the fashion of the town—which had set in, found in him an exponent as competent to give it exquisite expression as he was indisposed, and probably incompetent, to deepen or extend its scope. He attained early to nearly his full powers, and it does not much matter whether the *Essay on Criticism* was written at the age of twenty or at that of twenty-two. He could have improved it a little in form, but would hardly have altered it at all in matter, if he had written it thirty years later. The *Imitation of the Epistle of Horace to Augustus*, which was actually written about that time, is, though superior as verse, almost inferior as criticism, and more "out" in fact. The two together give a sufficient view of Pope as he wished to be taken critically. But to be perfectly fair we must add the critical utterances in his *Letters*,[1] his Preface to Shakespeare, and (with caution of course) the remarks attributed to him by Spence. The Preface has received much praise; and has deserved some even from those who follow not Pope generally. It would be unfair to blame him for adopting the mixed "beauty and fault" system which had the patronage of great names in antiquity, and found hardly even questioners in his own time. And it is something that he recognises Shakespeare's power over the passions, the individuality of his characters, his intuitive knowledge of the world and of nature. He is moderate and sensible on the relations of Shakespeare and Jonson; he has practically said all that is to be said, in an

The Letters.

[1] The most important of these is the sentence on Crashaw (with whom Pope has some points of sympathy), that he is wanting in "design, form, fable, which is the soul of poetry," and "exactness or consent of parts, which is the body," while he grants him "pretty conceptions, fine metaphors, glittering expressions, and something of a neat cast of verse, which are properly the dress, gems, or loose ornaments" of it. See my friend Mr Courthope (in his *Life*, ed. cit. of the *Works*, v. 63), with whom, for once, I am in irreconcilable disagreement.

endless and tiresome controversy, by writing, "To judge Shakespeare by Aristotle's rules is like trying a man by the laws of one country who acted under those of another." And for such utterances we may excuse, or at least pass over with little or no comment, the remarks that Shakespeare kept bad company, that he wrote to please the populace, that he resembles "an ancient majestic piece of Gothic architecture [so far, so good], where many of the details are childish, ill-placed, and unequal to its grandeur." The littleness of this patchy, yea-nay criticism beside the great and everlasting appreciation of his master Dryden speaks for itself; it is only fair to remember that the very existence of Dryden's for once really marmoreal inscription almost inevitably belittled and hampered Pope. He was obliged to be different; and internal as well as external influences made it certain that if he were different he would be less.

The Shakespeare Preface.

The *Popiana* of Spence[1] add more to our idea of Pope's critical faculty, or at least of its exercises; in fact, it is possible to take a much better estimate of Pope's "literature" from the *Anecdotes* than from the *Works*. Although the Boswellian spirit was, fortunately enough for posterity, very strong in the eighteenth century, there was no particular reason why Spence should toady Pope—especially as he published nothing to obtain pence or popularity from the toadying. That rather remarkable collection, or re-collection, of Italian-Latin poetry of the Renaissance,[2] of which not

Spence's Anecdotes.

[1] Spence (whose *Anecdotes* were printed partly by Malone, and completely by Singer in 1820, reprinted from the latter edition in 1858, and reselected by Mr Underhill (London, n. d.) in the last decade of the nineteenth century) has sometimes received praise as a critic himself. His *Polymetis* usefully brought together classical art and letters, and the *Anecdotes* themselves are not without taste. But his elaborate criticism of Pope's *Odyssey*, published in 1726, is of little value, neither praising nor blaming its subject for the right things, and characterised as a whole by a pottering and peddling kind of censorship.

[2] *Selecta Poemata Italorum qui Latine Scripserunt. Cura cujusdam Anonymi anno* 1684 *congesta, iterum in lucem data, una cum aliorum Italorum operibus. Accurante A. Pope.* 2 vols., London, 1740. The title-page contains absolutely all the ostensible editorial matter, and, as I have not got hold of the work of the Anonymus, I do not know how much Pope added. But his collection, as I can testify from some little knowledge of the subject, is good.

much notice has been taken by Pope's biographers, would, of itself, show critical interest in a part, and no unnoteworthy part, of literature: and a few of the Spencean salvages bear directly upon this. He need not have been ashamed of his special liking for Politian's *Ambra:* and he was right in thinking Bembo "stiff and unpoetical," though hardly in joining Sadolet with him in this condemnation. We know perfectly well why he did not like Rabelais, for which Swift very properly scolded him: indeed, he tells us himself, twice over, that "there were so many things" in Master Francis, "in which he could not see any manner of meaning driven at," that he could not read him with any patience. This is really more tale-telling than the constantly quoted passage about Walsh and correctness. For, after all, everybody aspires to be correct: only everybody has his own notions of what is correctness. It is not everybody—and, as we see, it was not the great Mr Pope—who could, or can, appreciate nonsense, and see how much more sensible than sense the best of it is. It would skill but little to go through his isolated judgments: but there are one or two which are eloquent.

The Essay on Criticism.

Still, it is to the *Essay* and the *Epistle* that we must turn for his deliberate theory of criticism, announced in youth, indorsed and emphasised in age. And we meet at once with a difficulty. The possessor of such a theory ought, at least, to have something like a connected knowledge, at least a connected view, of literature as a whole, and to be able to square the two. All Pope seems to have done is to take the *Arts* of Horace, Vida, and Boileau, to adopt as many of their principles as he understood, and as would go into his sharp antithetic couplet, to drag their historical illustrations head and shoulders into his scheme without caring for the facts, and to fill in and embroider with criticisms, observations, and precepts, sometimes very shrewd, almost always perfectly expressed, but far too often arbitrary, conventional, and limited. He is most unfortunate of all in the historical part, where Boileau had been sufficiently unfortunate before him. The Frenchman's observations on Villon and Ronsard had been ignorant enough, and forced enough: but Pope managed to go a little

beyond them in the *Essay*, and a great distance further still in the *Epistle*. The history of the famous passage,

"We conquered France, but felt our captive's charms,"[1]

is like nothing on earth but the history-poetry of the despised monkish ages, in which Alexander has twelve peers, and Arthur, early in the sixth century, overruns Europe with a British force, and fights with a Roman Emperor named Lucius. And the sketch of European literature in the *Essay*, if it contains no single statement so glaringly absurd, is as much a "tissue of gaps" as the Irishman's coat.

Attempts have been made (including some by persons deserving all respect, and thoroughly acquainted with the subject) to give Pope a high place, on the score of his charges to "follow nature." Unfortunately this is mere translation of Boileau, of Vida, and of Horace, in the first place: and, still more unfortunately, the poet's own arguments on his doctrine show that what *he* meant by "following nature," and what *we* mean by it, are two quite different things. He, usually at least, means "stick to the usual, the ordinary, the commonplace." Just so the legendary King of Siam, had he written an *Art of Poetry*, would have said "Follow nature, and do not talk about such unnatural things as ice and snow."

Regarded merely as a manual of the art of Pope's own poetry, without prejudice to any other, and as a satire on the faults of other kinds, without prejudice to the weaknesses of his own, the *Essay* is not merely an interesting document, but a really valuable one. Its cautions against desertion of nature in the directions of excess, of the unduly fantastic, are sound to this day: and its eulogies of ancient writers, though perhaps neither based on very extensive and accurate first-hand knowledge, nor specially appropriate to the matter in hand, contain much that is just in itself. One of the weakest parts, as might have been expected, is the treatment of rules, licences, and faults. The poet-critic practically confesses the otiosity of the whole system by admitting that a lucky licence is a rule, and

[1] *Ep. to Aug.*, l. 263.

that it is possible, as one of his own most famous and happiest lines says,

"To snatch a grace beyond the reach of art."

And when he paraphrases Quintilian to the effect that you must criticise

"With the same spirit that the author writ,"

and judge the whole, not the parts, he again goes perilously near to jettison his whole system.

In the same way consistency is the last thing that can be claimed for his chapters, as they may be called, on conceit, on language, "numbers" (the most famous and the most ingenious passage of the *Essay*), extremes, "turns," the Ancient and Modern quarrel, &c. The passage on Critics is among the best—for here sheer good sense (even in the temporary, much more in the universal, meaning) tells—and the historical sketch of them, though not too accurate, is vigorous.

The Epistle to Augustus.

The much later *Epistle* is far more desultory, and inevitably tinged by those personal feelings which many years of literary squabble had helped ill-health and natural disposition to arouse in Pope. But its general critical attitude is not different. He is angry with the revival of old literature which Watson and Allan Ramsay in Scotland, Oldys and others in England, were beginning, hints sneers even at Milton and the "weeds on Avon's bank," is at least as hackneyed as he is neat in his individual criticisms on poets nearer his own day, and defends poetry and literature generally in a patronising and half-apologetic strain. In fact, what he has really at heart is to be politely rude to George II.; not to give any critical account of English literature.

Remarks on Pope as a critic,

But the *Essay on Criticism* is too important a thing not to require a little more notice here. It is extremely desultory; but so is the *Epistola ad Pisones*, and it is by no means certain that Pope was not wise in falling back upon the Roman method, instead of emulating the appearance of system in the *Art Poétique*. This latter emphasises faults; Pope's *causerie* veils promiscuousness in the

elegant chit-chat of conversation. A bad critic is a more dangerous person than a bad poet; and true taste is as uncommon as true genius. Bad education is responsible for bad taste, and we must be very careful about our own. Nature is the guide; the "rules" are but methodised nature. We derive them, however, not from nature but from the ancient poets, whom we must study. Even in licences we must follow them. Bad critics are made by various causes, from ignorance and party spirit to personal animus. A good critic is candid, modest, well-bred, and sincere. The sort of history of criticism which concludes the piece makes it specially surprising that Johnson should have been so much kinder to Pope's learning than he was to Dryden's; but the author of the actual *Essay on Criticism*, and the author of the unhappily but projected *History* of it, were too thoroughly in agreement about poetry, and even about criticism itself, to make the latter quite an impartial judge of the former.

When we pass from generals to particulars Pope's cleverness at least appears more than ever. The sharply separated, neatly flying, and neatly ringing couplets deliver "one, two" in the most fascinating cut-and-thrust style, not without a brilliant parry now and then to presumed (and never very formidable) objections. The man's perfect skill in the execution of his own special style of poetry raises, and in this case not delusively, the expectation that he will know his theory as well as his practice. The "good sense," the "reason," are really and not merely nominally present. A great deal of what is said is quite undoubtedly true and very useful, not merely for reproof and correction in point of critical and poetical sin, but actually for instruction in critical and poetical righteousness.

But on further examination there is too often something wanting; nay, there is too often no real root of the matter present. The preliminary flourishes are well enough. And certainly no school will quarrel—though each school may take the privilege of understanding the words in its own way—with the doctrine "Follow Nature." But

"One science only will one genius fit"

is notoriously false to nature, and if intended as a hint to the critic, can only result in too common mistakes and injustices. So, too, when we pass from the glowing eulogy of Nature, and of her union with Art, to the Rules, there is a most deplorable gap. Those Rules, "discovered not devised," are "nature methodised." Very good. This means, if it means anything, a very true thing—that the Rules are extracted from observed works of genius. But how, a most fervent admirer of the Greeks may ask, did it happen that the Greeks discovered *all* these rules? How, especially, did it happen that they did so, when some kinds of literature itself were notoriously neither discovered nor devised? And when we get a little further, and are bidden to

> "Know well each Ancient's proper character,"

we may, or rather must, reply, "It is most necessary; but you will neglect the Moderns at your peril."

In short, here as elsewhere, Pope's dazzling elocution, winged with a distinct if narrow conception of his general purpose, flies right enough in the inane, but makes painfully little progress when it lights on the prosaic ground. The picture of "young Maro," with a sort of ciphering book before him, "totting up" Homer, Nature, and the Stagirite, and finding them all exactly equivalent, is really far more ludicrous than those flights of metaphysical fancy at which critics of Pope's school delight to gird; while the very climax of another kind of absurdity is reached by the accordance to the Ancients, not merely of the prerogative of laying down the rule always to be followed, but of the privilege of making the not-to-be-imitated exception. So again, fine as is the Alps passage, the famous doctrine of a "little learning" is an ingenious fallacy. It is not the little learning acquired, but the vast amount of ignorance left, that is dangerous. The admirable couplet,

> "True Wit is nature to advantage drest;
> What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed,"

though in itself the best thing in the whole poem, is unluckily placed, because this sensation of familiarity beneath novelty is

constantly given by those very "conceits" which Pope is denouncing. On "Language" and "Numbers" he is too notoriously speaking to a particular brief. And as for his more general cautions throughout, they are excellent sense for the most part, but have very little more to do with criticism than with any other function of life. A banker or a fishmonger, an architect, artist, or plain man, will no doubt be the better for avoiding extremes, partisanship, singularity, fashion, mere jealousy (personal or other), ignorance, pedantry, vice. And if he turns critic he will find these avoidances still useful to him, but not more specially useful than in his former profession.

and the critical attitude of his group.

What then was the critical attitude which was expressed so brilliantly, and which gave Pope a prerogative influence over all the orthodox criticism of his own century in England and even elsewhere? It can be sketched very fairly as being a sort of compromise between a supposed following of the ancients, and a real application, to literature in general and to poetry in particular, of the general taste and cast of thought of the time. The following of the Ancients—it has been often pointed out already—was, as the Articles of the Church of England have it, a "corrupt following": those who said Aristotle meant now nobody more ancient than Boileau, now no one more ancient than Vida, scarcely ever any one more ancient than Horace. The classics as a whole were very little studied, at least by those who busied themselves most with modern literature; and it had entered into the heads of few that, after all, the standards of one literature might, or rather must, require very considerable alteration before they could apply to another.[1] But Greek and Roman literature presented a body of poetry and of most other kinds, considerable, admittedly excellent, and mostly composed under the influence of distinct and identical critical principles. Very few men had a complete knowledge of even a single modern literature; hardly a man in France knew Old French as a whole, hardly a man in England, except mere antiquaries, knew Old English even as a part. There was

[1] Pope, *v. supra*, p. 454, actually admitted this as regards Aristotle and Shakespeare; yet the admission practically revokes most of the *Essay*.

probably not a man in Europe till Gray (and Gray was still young at Pope's death) who had any wide reading at once in classical literature and in the mediæval and modern literatures of different countries. Accordingly the principles of ancient criticism, not even in their purity fully adequate to modern works, and usually presented, not in their purity but in garbled and bastardised form, were all that they had to stand by.

This classical, or pseudo-classical, doctrine was further affected, in the case of literature generally, by the *ethos* of the time, and, in the case of poetry, by the curious delusion as to hard and fast syllabic prosody which has been noticed in connection with Bysshe. Classicism, in any pure sense, was certainly not to blame for this, for everybody with the slightest tinge of education knew that the chief Latin metre admitted the substitution of trisyllabic for dissyllabic feet in every place but one, and most knew that this substitution was even more widely permitted by Greek in a standard metre, approaching the English still nearer. But it had, as we have seen, been a gradually growing delusion, for a hundred and fifty years, in almost every kind of non-dramatic poetry.

As for the general tendency, the lines of that are clear—though the arbitrary extension and stiffening of them remain a little incomprehensible. Nature was to be the test; but an artificialised Nature, arranged according to the fashion of a town-haunting society—a Nature which submitted herself to a system of convention and generalisation. In so far as there was any real general principle it was that you were to be like everybody else—that singularity, except in doing the usual thing best, was to be carefully avoided. Pope, being a man of genius, could not help transcending this general conception constantly by his execution, not seldom by his thought, and sometimes in his critical precepts. But it remains the conception of his time and of himself.

Philosophical and Professional Critics.

The writers whom we have been discussing, since we parted with Dennis, have all been considerable men of letters, who in more or less degree busied themselves with criticism. We must now pass to those who, without exactly deserving the former description, undertook the sub-

ject either as part of those "philosophical" inquiries which, however loosely understood, were so eagerly and usefully pursued by the eighteenth century, or as direct matter of professional duty. The first division supplies Lord Kames in Scotland and "Hermes" Harris in England. Whether we are right in reserving Shaftesbury, Hume, Adam Smith, &c., from it, so as to deal with them from the Æsthetic side in the next volume, may be matter of opinion.

To the second belong Trapp, Blair, and Campbell. Trapp need not detain us very long; but as first occupant of the first literary chair in England, and so the author of a volume of *Prælections* respectable in themselves, and starting a line of similar work which, to the present day, has contributed admirable critical documents, he cannot be omitted. He was the author of one of the wittiest epigrams[1] on record, but he did not allow himself much sparkle in his lectures.[2] Perhaps, indeed, he was right not to do so.

Trapp.

Hugh Blair, half a century later than Trapp, in 1759, started, like him, the teaching of modern literature in his own country. He had the advantage, as far as securing a popular audience goes, of lecturing in English, and he was undoubtedly a man of talent. The *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*,[3] which were delivered with great *éclat* for nearly a quarter of a century from the Chair of their subject, are very far, indeed, from being devoid of merit. They provide a very solid, if a somewhat mannered and artificial instruction, both by precept and example, in what may be called the "full-dress plain style" which was popular in the eighteenth century. They are

Blair.

[1] *Individual preference, in the case of the famous pair of epigrams on the books and the troop of horse sent by George I. to Cambridge and to Oxford respectively, may be biassed by academical and by political partisanship. But while it is matter of opinion whether "Tories own no argument but force," and whether, in certain circumstances, a University may not justifiably "want loyalty," no one can ever maintain that it is not disgraceful to a university to "want learning." This it is which gives the superior wing and sting to Trapp's javelin.*

[2] *Prælectiones Poeticæ*, London, 3rd ed., 1736. The first of the first batch was printed as early as 1711, and an English translation (not by the author) was published in 1742. I hope to give in the next volume, as a prelude to notice of Mr Arnold's work in the Oxford Chair, a survey of all the more noteworthy of his predecessors.

[3] The first ed. is that of Edinburgh, 1783: mine is that of London, 1823.

as original as could be expected. The critical examination of Addison's style, if somewhat meticulous, is mostly sound, and has, like Johnson's criticisms of Dryden and Pope, the advantage of thorough sympathy, of freedom from the drawback—so common in such examinations—that author and critic are standing on different platforms, looking in different directions, speaking, one may almost say, in mutually incomprehensible tongues. The survey of Belles Lettres is, on its own scheme, ingenious and correct: there are everywhere evidences of love of Literature (as the lover understands her), of good education and reading, of sound sense. Blair is to be very particularly commended for accepting to the full the important truth that "Rhetoric" in modern times really means "Criticism"; and for doing all he can to destroy the notion, authorised too far by ancient critics, and encouraged by those of the Renaissance, that Tropes and Figures are not possibly useful classifications and names, but fill a real arsenal of weapons, a real cabinet of reagents, by the employment of which the practitioner can refute, or convince, or delight, as the case may be.

The Lectures on Rhetoric.

But with this, and with the further praise due to judicious borrowings from the ancients, the encomium must cease. In Blair's general critical view of literature the eighteenth-century blinkers are drawn as close as possible. From no writer, even in French, can more "awful examples" be extracted, not merely of perverse critical assumption, but of positive historical ignorance. Quite early in the second Lecture, and after some remarks (a little arbitrary, but not valueless) on delicacy and correctness in taste, we find, within a short distance of each other, the statements that "in the reign of Charles II. such writers as *Suckling and Etheridge* were held in esteem for dramatic composition," and later, "If a man shall assert that Homer has no beauties whatever, that he holds him to be a dull and spiritless writer, and that he *would as soon peruse any legend of old knight-errantry* as the *Iliad*, then I exclaim that my antagonist is either void of all taste," &c. Here, on the one hand, the lumping of Suckling and Etherege together, and the implied assumption that not merely Suckling, but Etherege, is a worthless dramatist, gives

us one "light," just as the similar implication that "an old legend of knight-errantry" is necessarily an example of dulness, spiritlessness, and absence of beauty, gives us another. That Blair lays down, even more peremptorily than Johnson, and as peremptorily as Bysshe, that the pause in an English line may fall after the 4th, 5th, 6th, or 7th syllable, and no other, is not surprising; and his observations on Shakespeare are too much in the usual "faults-saved-by-beauties" style to need quotation. But that he cites, with approval, a classification of the great literary periods of the world which excludes the Elizabethan Age altogether, is not to be omitted. It stamps the attitude.

The Dissertation on Ossian.

These same qualities appear in the once famous but now little read *Dissertation on Ossian.*[1] That, in the sense of the word on which least stress is laid in these volumes, this "Critical Dissertation" is absolutely *un*critical does not much matter. Blair does not even attempt to examine the evidence for and against the genuineness of the work he is discussing. He does not himself know Gaelic; friends (like Hector M'Intyre) have told him that they heard Gaelic songs very like *Ossian* sung in their youth; there are said to be manuscripts; that is enough for him. Even when he cites and compares parallel passages—the ghost-passage and that from the book of Job, Fingal's "I have no son" and *Othello* —which derive their whole beauty from exact coincidence with the Bible or Shakespeare, he will allow no kind of suspicion to cross his mind. But this we might let pass. It is in the manner in which he seeks to explain the "amazing degree of regularity and art," which he amazingly ascribes to Macpherson's redaction, the "rapid and animated style," the "strong colouring of imagination," the "glowing sensibility of heart," that the most surprising thing appears. His citations are as copious as his praises of them are hard to indorse. But his critical argument rests almost (not quite) wholly on showing that *Fingal* and *Temora* are worked out quite properly on Aristotelian principles by way of central action and episode, and that there are

[1] I have it with *The Poems of Ossian*, 2 vols., London, 1796. Blair had taken Macpherson under his wing as early as 1760.

constant parallels to Homer, the only poet whom he will allow to be Ossian's superior. In short, he simply applies to *Ossian* Addison's procedure with *Paradise Lost*. The critical piquancy of this is double. For we know that *Ossian* was powerful—almost incredibly powerful—all over Europe in a sense quite opposite to Blair's; and we suspect, if we do not know, that Mr James Macpherson was quite clever enough purposely to give it something of the turn which Blair discovers.

Kames.

The charge which may justly be brought against Blair—that he is both too exclusively and too purblindly "belletristic"—cannot be extended to Henry Home, Lord Kames. Johnson, whom Kames disliked violently, and who returned the dislike with rather good-natured if slightly contemptuous patronage, dismissed the *Elements of Criticism*, 1761,[1] as "a pretty Essay, which deserves to be held in some estimation, though much of it is chimerical."[2] The sting of this lies, as usual, in the fact that it is substantially true, though by no means all the truth. The *Elements of Criticism* is a pretty book, and an estimable one, and, what is more, one of very considerable originality. Its subtlety and ingenuity are often beyond Johnson's own reach; it shows a really wide knowledge of literature, modern as well as ancient; and it is surprisingly, though not uniformly, free from the special "classical" purblindness of which Johnson and Blair are opposed, but in their different ways equal, examples. Yet a very great deal of it *is* "chimerical," and, what is worse, a very great deal more is, whether chimerical or not in itself, irrelevant. It presents a philosophical treatise, vaguely and tentatively æsthetic rather than critical, yoked in the loosest possible manner to a bundle of quasi-professorial exercises in Lower and Higher Rhetoric. The second part might not improperly be termed "Critical Illustrations of Rhetoric." The first could only be properly entitled "Literary Illustrations of Morals."

Of course this excellent Scots lawyer and ingenious

[1] It had reached its eighth edition in 1807, the date of my copy. Perhaps some may think that Kames, as being mainly an æsthetician, ought to be postponed with Shaftesbury, Hume, &c. My reason for not postponing is the large amount of *positive* literary criticism in his book.

[2] Boswell, Globe ed., p. 132. He was elsewhere more and less, kind.

"Scotch metaphysician" had strong precedents to urge for making a muddle of Moral Philosophy and Literary Criticism. It has been pointed out that Aristotle himself is not a little exposed to the same imputation. But Kames embroils matters to an extent never surpassed, except by those, to be found in every day, who are incapable of taking the literary point of view at all, and who simply treat literature as something expressing agreement or disagreement with their moral, political, religious, or other views. He seems himself to have had, at least once, a slight qualm. "A treatise of ethics is not my province: I carry my view no farther than to the elements of criticism, in order to show that the fine arts are a subject of reasoning as well as of taste."[1] If this was his rule he certainly gives himself the most liberal indulgence in applying it. His First Chapter is devoted to "Perceptions and Ideas in a Train"; the second (an immensely long one, containing a good third of the first volume) to "Emotions and Passions"; while the whole of the rest till the end of the seventeenth chapter is really occupied by the same class of subject. Kames excels in that constantly ingenious, and often acute, dissection of human nature which was the pride and pleasure of his century and his country, but which is a little apt to pay itself with clever generalisations as if they were *veræ causæ*. In one place we find a distribution of all the pleasures of the senses into pain of want, desire, and satisfaction. In another[2] the philosopher solemnly informs us, "I love my daughter less after she is married, and my mother less after a second marriage; the marriage of my son or my father diminishes not my affection so remarkably." An almost burlesque illustration of the procedure of the school is given in the dictum,[3] "Where the course of nature is joined with Elevation the effect must be delightful; and hence the singular beauty of smoke ascending in a calm morning." When one remembers this, and comes later[4] to the admirable remark, "Thus, to

The Elements of Criticism.

[1] Vol. i. chap. iii., on "Beauty"; i. 195 ed. cit.

[2] i. 77.

[3] i. 26.

[4] i. 288, *note*. Kames had just before, in his chapter on "Motion and Force" (i. 250-255), referred complacently to his own indulgence in this foible, and had accumulated others of the same kind.

account for an effect of which there is no doubt, any cause, however foolish, is made welcome," it is impossible not to say "Thou sayest it"; as also in another case, where he lays it down that "Were corporeal pleasures dignified over and above [*i.e.*, beside the natural propensity which incites us to them] with a place in a high class, they would infallibly disturb the balance of the mind by outweighing the social affections. This is a satisfactory final cause for refusing to these pleasures any degree of dignity."[1] I am tempted to quote Kames's philosophy of the use of tobacco[2] also, but the stuff and method of his first volume must be sufficiently intelligible already.

The second, much more to the purpose, is considerably less interesting. A very long chapter deals with Beauty of Language with respect to Sound, Signification, Resemblance between Sound and Signification, and Metre. It is abundantly stocked with well-chosen examples from a wide range of literature, and full of remarks, generally ingenious and sometimes both new and bold, as where at the outset Kames has the audacity to contradict Aristotle, by implication at least, and lay it down that "of all the fine arts, painting and sculpture only are in their nature imitative."[3] But it is not free from the influence of the idols of its time. Of such, in one kind, may be cited the attribution to Milton of "many careless lines";[4] for if there is one thing certain in the risky and speculative range of literary dogmatism, it is that Milton never wrote a "careless" line in his life. If his lines are ever bad (and perhaps they are sometimes), they are bad deliberately and of malice. In another and more serious kind may be ranged the predominating determination to confuse the sensual with the intellectual side of poetry. This, of course, is Kames's root-idea; but that it is a root of evil may be shown sufficiently by the following passage in his discussion of the pause—in relation to which subject he is as wrong as nearly all his contemporaries. He is talking of a pause between adjective and substantive.[5] What occurs to him is that "a quality cannot exist independent of a subject, nor are they separable even in imagination, because they make

[1] i. 359. [2] i. 405, 410, 411, 416, 417. [3] ii. 3.
[4] ii. 163. [5] ii. 129.

part of the same idea, and for that reason, with respect to melody as well as to sense, it must be disagreeable to bestow upon the adjective a sort of independent existence by interjecting a pause between it and its substantive." His examples are no doubt vitiated by the obsession of the obligatory "middle" pause, which makes him imagine one between adjective and substantive in

"The rest, his many-coloured robe concealed,"

where the only real pause, poetic as well as grammatical, is at "rest." But his principle is clear, and it is as clearly a wrong principle. It ignores the great fact glanced at above, that the pleasure of poetry is double—intellectual *and* sensual—and that the two parts are in a manner independent of each other. And in the second place, even on its own theory, it credits the mere intellect with too sluggish faculties. In the first line which Kames suggests as "harsh and unpleasant" for this reason,

"Of thousand bright inhabitants of air,"

the pause at "bright" is so slight a one that some might deny its existence. But if it be held necessary, can we refuse to the *subtilitas intellectus* the power of halting, for the second of a second, to conceive the joint idea of number and brightness, before it moves further to enrich this by the notion of "inhabitants of air"? The mere and literal Lockist may do so; but no other will. The Figures enjoy a space which, without being surprised at it, one grudges; and the Unities are handled rather oddly, while a digression of some fifty pages on Gardening and Architecture speaks for itself. The conclusion on the Standard of Taste is singularly inconclusive; and an interesting appendix on "terms defined and explained" presents the singularity that not, I think, one of the terms so dealt with has anything specially to do with literature or art at all.

Nevertheless, though it is easy to be smart upon Kames, and not very difficult to expose serious inadequacies and errors both in the general scheme and the particular execution, the *Elements of Criticism* is a book of very great interest and importance, and worthy of much more attention than it has for a long

time past received. To begin with, his presentation, at the very outset of his book, of Criticism as "the most agreeable of all amusements"[1] was one of those apparently new and pleasant shocks to the general which are, in reality, only the expression of an idea for some time germinating and maturing in the public mind. Even Addison, even Pope, while praising and preaching Criticism, had half-flouted and half-apologised for it. Swift, a great critic on his own day, had flouted it almost or altogether in others. The general idea of the critic had been at worst of a malignant, at best of a harmless, pedant. Kames presented him as something quite different,—as a man no doubt of learning, but also of position and of the world, "amusing," as well as exercising himself, and bringing the fashionable philosophy to the support of his amusement.

But he did more than this. His appreciation of Shakespeare is, taking it together (and his references to the subject are numerous and important), the best of his age. His citations show a remarkable relish for the Shakespearian humour, and though he cannot clear his mind entirely from the "blemish-and-beauty" cant, which is ingrained in the Classical theory, and which, as we saw, infected even such a critic as Longinus, he is far freer from it than either Johnson or Blair. In his chapter on the Unities he comes very near to Hurd[2] (to whom, as the *Elements of Criticism* preceded the *Letters on Chivalry* in time, he may have given a hint) in recognising the true Romantic Unity of Action which admits plurality so far as the different interests work together, or contrast advantageously. He has a most lucid and sensible exposure of the difference between the conditions of the Greek theatre and ours. In short, he would stand very high if he were not possessed with the pseudo-logical mania which makes him calmly and gravely write[3]—"Though a cube is more agreeable in itself than a parallelopipedon,[4] yet a large parallelopipedon set on its smaller base is by its elevation more agreeable, and hence the beauty of a Gothic

[1] i. 33.

[2] Hurd is reserved for the next volume.

[3] ii. 457.

[4] Kames has this spelling, which is indeed so universal that any other may seem pedantic. Yet it is needless to say that the word so spelt is a *vox nihili*, and should be "parallelepipedon."

tower." But this *amabilis insania* is in itself more amiable than insane. He wants to admit the Gothic tower, and that is the principal thing. Magdalen, and Merton, and Mechlin may well, in consideration of his slighting in their favour the more intrinsic charms of a cube, afford to let a smile flicker round their venerable skylines at his methodical insistence on justifying admiration of them by calling them large parallelopipeda set on their smaller ends. And the cube can console herself with his admission of her superior intrinsic loveliness.

Campbell.

The faults of Blair and of Kames are both, for the most part, absent, while much more than the merit of either, in method and closeness to the aim, is present, in the very remarkable *Philosophy of Rhetoric*[1] which Dr George Campbell began, and, to some extent, composed, as early as 1750; though he did not finish and publish it till nearly thirty years later (1777). It may indeed be admitted that this piecemeal composition is not without its effect on the book, which contains some digressions (especially one on Wit, Humour, and Ridicule, and another on the cause of the pleasure received from the exhibition of painful objects) more excrescent than properly episodic. It is, moreover, somewhat weighted by the author's strictly professional and educational design, in retaining as much of the mere business part of the ancient Rhetoric as would or might be useful to future preachers, advocates, or members of Parliament. Campbell, too, is a less "elegant" writer than Blair; and his acuteness has a less vivacious play than that of Kames. But here concessions are exhausted; and the book, however much we may disagree with occasional expressions in it, remains the most important treatise on the New Rhetoric that the eighteenth century produced. Indeed, strange as it may seem, Whately's, its principal formal successor in the nineteenth, is distinctly retrograde in comparison.

The Philosophy of Rhetoric.

The New Rhetoric—the Art of Criticism—this is what Campbell really attempts. He is rather chary of acknowledging his own position, and, in fact, save in his title, seldom employs the term Rhetoric, no doubt partly from that unlucky contempt of scholastic appellations

[1] I use the Tegg edition, London, 1850.

which shows itself in his well-known attack on Logic. But his definition of "Eloquence"—the term which he employs as a preferred synonym of Rhetoric itself—is very important, and practically novel. The word "Eloquence, in its greatest latitude, denotes that art or talent by which the discourse is adapted to its end." Now this, though he modestly shelters it under Quintilian's *scientia bene dicendi* and *dicere secundum virtutem orationis*, asserting also its exact correspondence with Cicero's description of the best orator as he who *dicendo animos delectat audientium et docet et permovet*, is manifestly far more extensive than the latter of these, and much less vague than the former. In fact Rhetoric, new dubbed as Eloquence, becomes the Art of Literature, or in other words Criticism.

It has been allowed that this bold and admirable challenge of the whole province—for "discourse" is soon seen to include "writing"—is not always so well supported. After an interesting introduction (vindicating the challenge, and noting Kames more especially as one who, though in a different way, had made it before him), Campbell for a time, either because he is rather afraid of his own boldness, or to conciliate received opinions on the matter (or, it has been suggested, because the book was written at different times, and with perhaps slightly different ends), proceeds to discuss various matters which have very little to do with his general subject. Sometimes, as in the Chapter, before referred to, on "The Nature and Use of the Scholastic Art of Syllogising," he wrecks himself in a galley which he had not the slightest need to enter. The longer discourse on Evidence which precedes this is, of course, fully justified on the old conception of Rhetoric, but digressory, or at least excursory, on his own. The above-mentioned sections on Ridicule, and on the æsthetic pleasure derivable from painful subjects, are excursions into the debatable kinds between literature and Ethics, though much less extravagant than those of Kames, and perhaps, as excursions, not absolutely to be barred or banned; while chapters vii.-x., which deal with the "Consideration of Hearers," &c., &c., are once more Aristotelian relapses, pardonable if not strictly necessary. But not quite a third part of the whole treatise is occupied by this First Book of

the three into which it is divided; and not a little of this third is, strictly or by a little allowance, to the point. The remaining two-thirds are to that point without exception or digression of any kind, so that the Aristotelian distribution is exactly reversed.

The titles of the two Books, "The Foundations and Essential Properties of Elocution," and "The Discriminating Properties of Elocution," must be taken with due regard to Campbell's use of the last word.[1] But they require hardly any other proviso or allowance. He first, with that mixture of boldness and straight-hitting which is his great merit, attacks the general principles of the use of Language, and proceeds to lay down nine Canons of Verbal Criticism, which are in the main so sound and so acute that they are not obsolete to the present day. There is more that is arbitrary elsewhere, and Campbell seems sometimes to retrograde over the line which separates Rhetoric and Composition. But it must be remembered that this line has never been very exactly drawn, and has, both in Scotland and in America, if not also in England, been often treated as almost non-existent up to the present day. In his subsequent distinction of five rhetorical Qualities of Style—Perspicuity, Vivacity, Elegance, Animation, and Music—Campbell may be thought to be not wholly happy. For the three middle qualities are practically one, and it is even questionable whether Music would not be best included with them in some general term, designating whatever is added by style proper to Perspicuity, or the sufficient but unadorned conveyance of meaning. As, however, is very common, if not universal, with him, his treatment is in advance of his nomenclature, for the rest of the book—nearly a full half of it—is in fact devoted to the *two* heads of Perspicuity and Vivacity, the latter tacitly subsuming all the three minor qualities. And there is new and good method in the treatment of Vivacity, as shown first by the choice of words, secondly by their number, and thirdly by their arrangement, while a section

[1] He had, of course, good authority for it, including that of Dryden; but it is obviously better to limit it in the modern sense than to use it equivocally. Mason (not Gray's friend, but an interesting and little-known person to whom I hope to recur in the next volume) had already seen this, and expressly referred to it.

under the first head on "words considered as sounds" comes very near to the truth. That there should be a considerable section on Tropes was to be expected, and, as Campbell treats it, it is in no way objectionable. His iconoclasm as to logical Forms becomes much more in place, and much more effective, in regard to rhetorical Figures.

One, however, of the best features of the work has hardly yet been noticed; and that is the abundance of examples, and the thorough way in which they are discussed. To a reader turning the book over without much care it may seem inferior as a *thesaurus* to Kames, because the passages quoted are as a rule embedded in the text, and not given separately, in the fashion which makes of large parts of the *Elements of Criticism* a sort of anthology, a collection of beauties or deformities, as the case may be. But this is in accordance with the singularly businesslike character of Campbell's work throughout. And if it also seem that he does not launch out enough in appreciation of books or authors as wholes, let it be remembered that English criticism was still in a rather rudimentary condition, and that the state of taste in academic circles was not very satisfactory. It would not, of course, be impossible to produce from him examples of those obsessions of the time which we have noticed in his two compatriots, as we shall notice them in the far greater Johnson. But he could not well escape these obsessions, and he suffers from them in a very mild form.

Harris.

James Harris,[1] author of *Hermes* (and of the house of Malmesbury, which was ennobled in the next generation), is perhaps the chief writer whom England, in the narrower sense, has to set against Blair, Kames, and Campbell in mid-eighteenth century. But he is disappointing. It would not be reasonable to quarrel with the *Hermes* itself for not being literary, because it does not pretend to be anything but grammatical; and the *Philosophical Arrangements*, though they do sometimes approach literature, may plead benefit of title for not doing so oftener. But the *Discourse on Music, Painting, and Poetry*, and the *Philological Enquiries*—in which Philology is expressly intimated to mean "love of letters" in the higher

[1] *Works*, Oxford, 1841.

sense—hold out some prospects. The performance is but little. Readers of Boswell will remember that Johnson, though the author of *Hermes* was very polite to him, both personally and with the pen, used, to his henchman's surprise and grief, to speak very roughly of Harris, applying to him on one occasion the famous and damning phrase, "a prig, and a bad prig," and elsewhere hinting doubts as to his competency in Greek. That the reproach of priggishness was deserved (whether with the aggravation or not) nobody can read half-a-dozen pages of Harris without allowing,—his would-be complimentary observation on Fielding[1] would determine by itself. But the principal note of Harris, as a critic, is not so much priggishness as confused superficiality. These qualities are less visible in the *Dialogue* (which is an extremely short, not contemptible, but also not unimportant, exercitation in the direction of Æsthetic proper) than in the *Enquiries*, which were written late in life, and which, no doubt, owe something of their extraordinary garrulity to "the irreparable outrage."

The Philological Enquiries.

This book begins, with almost the highest possible promise for us, in a Discussion of the Rise of Criticism, its various species, Philosophical, Historical, and Corrective, &c. It goes on hardly less promisingly, if the mere chapter-headings are taken, with discourses on Numbers, Composition, Quantity, Alliteration, &c.; the Drama, its Fable and its Manners, Diction, and, at the end of the second part, an impassioned defence of Rules. But the Third, which promises a discussion of "the taste and literature of the Middle Age," raises the expectation almost to agony-point. Here is what we have been waiting for so long: here is the great gap going to be filled. At last a critic not merely takes a philosophic-historic view of criticism, but actually proposes to supplement it with an inquiry into those regions of literature on which his predecessors have turned an obstinately blind eye. As is the exaltation of the promise, so is the aggravation of the disappointment. Harris's first part, though by no means ill-planned, is very insufficiently carried out, and the hope of goodness in the third is cruelly dashed beforehand by the

[1] Note to Pt. II. chap. vii. of the *Enquiries*, p. 433, ed. cit.

sentence, "At length, after a long and barbarous period, when the shades of monkery began to retire," &c. The writer's mere enumeration of Renaissance critics is very haphazard, and his remarks, both on them and their successors, perfunctory in the extreme. He hardly dilates on anybody or anything except—following the tradition from Pope and Swift—on Bentley and his mania for correction and conjecture.

In the second part he gives himself more room, and is better worth reading, but the sense of disappointment continues. In fact, Harris is positively irritating. He lays it down, for instance, that "nothing excellent in a literary way happens merely by chance," a thesis from the discussion of which much might come. But he simply goes off into a loose discussion of the effects and causes of literary pleasure, with a good many examples in which the excellence of his precept, "seek the cause," is more apparent than the success of his own researches. The rest is extremely discursive, and seldom very satisfactory, being occupied in great part with such tenth-rate stuff as Lillo's *Fatal Curiosity*. As for Harris's defence of the Rules, he does not, in fact, defend them at all; but, as is so common with controversialists, frames an indictment, which no sensible antagonist would ever bring, in order to refute it. He says that "he never knew any genius cramped by rules, and had known great geniuses miserably err by neglecting them." A single example of this last would have been worth the whole treatise. But Harris does not give it. Finally, "the Taste and Literature of the Middle Age" seem to him to be satisfactorily discussed by ridiculing the Judgment of God, talking at some length about Byzantine writers, giving a rather long account of Greek philosophy in its ancient stages, quoting freely from travellers to Athens and Constantinople, introducing "the Arabians," with anecdotes of divers caliphs, saying something of the Schoolmen, a little about the Provençal poets, something (to do him justice) of the rise of accentual prosody,[1] and a very, very little about Chaucer, Petrarch, Mandeville, Marco Polo, Sir John Fortescue, and—Sannazar! "And now having done with the

[1] Harris deserves a good word for his prosodic studies, which may entitle him to reappear in the next volume.

Middle Age," he concludes—having, that is to say, shown that, except a *pot-pourri* of mainly historical anecdote, he knew nothing whatever about it; or, if this seem harsh, that his knowledge was not of any kind that could possibly condition his judgment of literature favourably. In fact, no one shows that curious eighteenth-century confusion of mind, which we shall notice frequently in other countries, better than Harris. He is, as we have seen, a fervent devotee of the Rules—he believes[1] that, before any examples of poetry, there was an abstract schedule of Epic, Tragedy, and everything else down to Epigram, which you cannot follow but to your good, and cannot neglect but to your peril. Yet, on the one hand, he feels the philosophic impulse, and on the other, the literary and historical curiosity, before which these rules were bound to vanish.

"*Estimate*" *Brown: his* History of Poetry.

A few allusions,[2] in contemporaries of abiding fame, have kept half alive the name—though very few, save specialists, are likely to be otherwise than accidentally acquainted with the work—of John Brown of Newcastle, author of the once famous *Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times*,[3] and afterwards, when he had gained reputation by this, of a *Dissertation on the Rise of Poetry and Music*,[4] later still slightly altered, and re-christened *History of the Rise and Progress of Poetry*.[5] The *Estimate* itself is one of those possibly half-unconscious pieces of quackery which from time to time put (in a manner which somehow or other tickles the longer ears among their contemporaries) the old cry that *every*thing is rotten in the state of Denmark. There is not much in it that is directly literary; the chief point of the kind is an attack on the Universities: it may be noted that quacks generally do attack Universities. The *Dissertation-History* is a much less

[1] "There never was a time when rules did not exist; they always made a part of that immutable truth," &c. —P. 450.

[2] The best known is Cowper's, in *Table Talk*, ll. 384, 385—

"The inestimable Estimate of Brown
Rose like a paper-kite and charmed the town."

See also Chesterfield, to the Bishop of Waterford, April 14, 1758. Chesterfield was no Bottom, but, being melancholy at the time, he was tickled.

[3] London, 1757, 8vo.

[4] London, 1763, 4to.

[5] Newcastle, 1764, 8vo.

claptrap piece, but far more amusing to read. Brown is one of those rash but frank persons who attempt creation as well as criticism; and those who will may hear how

> "Peace on Nature's lap reposes [why not *vice versa?*]
> Pleasure strews her guiltless roses,"

and so forth. The difference of the two forms is not important. In the second, Brown simply left out Music, so far as he could, as appealing to a special public only. He believes in *Ossian*, then quite new. He thinks it contains "Pictures which no civilised modern could ever *imbibe* in their strength, nor consequently could ever *throw out*"—an image so excessively Georgian (putting aside the difficulty of imbibing a picture) that one has to abbreviate comment on it. For the rest, Brown rejoices and wallows in the naturalistic generalisation of his century. He begins, of course, with the Savage State, lays it down that, at religious and other festivals, men danced and sang, that then organised professional effort supplemented unorganised, and so poets arose. Then comes about a sort of Established Choir, whence the various kinds are developed. And we have the Chinese—the inevitable Chinese—Fow-hi, and Chao-hao, and all their trumpery. Negligible as an authority, Brown perhaps deserves to rank as a symptom.

But we must leave minorities, and come to him who is here ὁ μέγας.

Johnson: his preparation for criticism.

There is no reason to doubt that Johnson's critical opinions were formed quite early in life, and by that mixture of natural bent and influence of environment which, as a rule, forms all such opinions. There has been a tendency to regard, as the highest mental attitude, that of considering everything as an open question, of being ready to reverse any opinion at a moment's notice. As a matter of fact, we have record of not many men who have proceeded in this way; and it may be doubted whether among them is a single person of first-rate genius, or even talent. Generally speaking, the men whose genius or talent has a "stalk of carle hemp" in it find, in certain of the great primeval creeds of the world, political, ecclesiastical, literary, or other, something which suits

their bent. The bent of their time may assist them in fastening on to this by attraction or repulsion—it really does not much matter which it is. In either case they will insensibly, from an early period, choose their line and shape their course accordingly. They will give a certain independence to it; they will rarely be found merely "swallowing formulas." It is the *other* class which does this, with leave reserved to get rid of the said formulas by a mental emetic and swallow another set, which will very likely be subjected to the same fate. But the hero will be in the main *Qualis ab incepto.*

Johnson was in most things a Tory by nature, his Toryism being conditioned, first by that very strong bent towards a sort of transcendental scepticism which many great Tories have shown; secondly, by the usual peculiarities of social circumstance and mental constitution; and lastly, by the state of England in his time—a state to discuss which were here impertinent, but which, it may be humbly suggested, will not be quite appreciated by accepting any, or all, of the more ordinary views of the eighteenth century.

His view of literature was in part determined by these general influences, in part—perhaps chiefly—by special impinging currents. His mere birth-time had not very much to do with it—Thomson, Dyer, Lady Winchelsea, who consciously or unconsciously worked against it, were older, and in some cases much older, than he was; Gray and Shenstone, who consciously worked against it in different degrees, were not much younger.[1] The view was determined in his case, mainly no doubt by that natural bent which is quite inexplicable, but also by other things explicable enough. Johnson, partly though probably not wholly in consequence of his near sight, was entirely insensible to the beauties of nature; he made fun of "prospects"; he held that "one blade of grass is like another" (which it most certainly is not, even in itself, let alone its surroundings); he liked human society in its most artificial form—that provided by towns, clubs, parties. In the second place, his ear was only

[1] His birth-year was 1709; Thomson's 1700; Dyer's perhaps the same; Shenstone's 1714; Gray's 1716. Lady Winchelsea had been born as far back as 1660.

less deficient than his eye. That he did not care for music, in the scientific sense, is not of much importance; but it is quite clear that, in poetry, only an extremely regular and almost mathematical beat of verse had any chance with him. Thirdly, he was widely read in the Latin Classics, less widely in Greek, still more widely in the artificial revived Latin of the Renaissance and the seventeenth century.[1] Fourthly, he was, for a man so much given to reading—for one who ranged from Macrobius in youth to *Parismus and Parismenus* in age, and from *Travels in Abyssinia* to *Prince Titi*—not very widely read either in mediæval Latin or in the earlier divisions of the modern languages; indeed, of these last he probably knew little or nothing. Fifthly, the greatest poet in English immediately before his time, and the greatest poet in English during his youth and early manhood, had been exponents, the one mainly, the other wholly, of a certain limited theory of English verse. Sixthly, the critical school in which he had been brought up was strictly neo-classic. Seventhly, and to conclude, such rebels to convention as appeared in his time were chiefly men whom he regarded with unfriendly dislike, or with friendly contempt. Nor can it be said that any one of the contemporary partisans of "the Gothick" was likely to convince a sturdy adversary. Walpole was a spiteful fribble with a thin vein of genius; Gray a sort of Mr Facing-Both-Ways in literature, who had "classical" mannerisms worse than any of Johnson's own, and whose dilettante shyness and scanty production invited ridicule. Both were Cambridge men (and Johnson did not love Cambridge men, nor they him), and both were Whigs. Percy and Warton were certainly not very strong as originals, and had foibles enough even as scholars. But whether these reasons go far enough, or do not so go, Johnson's general critical attitude never varies in the least.[2] It was, as has been said, prob-

[1] He was perhaps the last man of very great power who entertained the Renaissance superstition of Latin. He was horrified at the notion of an English epitaph; and in the first agony of his stroke in 1783 he rallied and racked his half-paralysed brains to make Latin verses as the best test of his sanity.

[2] Let it be noted, however, that in Johnson, as in most strong men, there were certain leanings to the other side, certain evidences of the "identity of contradictories." His sense of mys-

ably formed quite early; it no doubt appeared in those but dimly known contributions to periodical literature which defrayed so ill the expense of his still more dimly known first twenty years in London. We have from him no single treatise, as in the cases of Dante and Longinus, no pair of treatises, as in the case of Aristotle, to go upon. But in the four great documents of *The Rambler*, *Rasselas*, the Shakespeare *Preface*, and the *Lives*, we see it in the two first rigid, peremptory, in the *Preface*, curiously and representatively uncertain, in the last conditioned by differences which allow it somewhat freer play, and at some times making a few concessions, but at others more pugnacious and arbitrary than before.

The critical element in *The Rambler* is necessarily large; but a great deal of it is general and out of our way.[1] Directly concerning us are the papers on the aspects (chiefly formal) of Milton's poetry—especially versification—on which Addison had not spoken, with some smaller papers on lesser subjects. The Miltonic *examen* begins at No. 86. Johnson is as uncompromising as the great Bysshe himself on the nature of English prosody. "The heroick measures of the English language may be properly considered as pure or mixed." They are pure when "the accent rests on every second syllable through the whole line." In other words, "purity" is refused to anything but the strict iambic decasyllable. Nay, he goes further; this is not only "purity" and "the completest harmony possible," but it ought to be "exactly kept in distichs" and in the last line of a (verse) paragraph.

The Rambler on Milton.

Nevertheless, for variety's sake, the "mixed" measure is allowed; "though it always injures the harmony of the line considered by itself," it makes us appreciate the "harmonious" lines better. And we soon perceive that even this exceedingly

tery, his religiosity, his strong passions, his tendency to violence in taste and opinions — were all rather Romantic than Classical.

[1] The Allegory on Criticism (daughter of Labour and Truth, who gives up her task to Time, but is temporarily personated by Flattery and Malevolence) in No. 3 almost speaks itself in the parenthetical description just given. Cf. also 4, on Ancient and Modern Romances; 22, another Allegory on Wit and Learning; 23, on the Contrariety of Criticism; and 36, 37, on "Pastoral Poetry."

grudging, and in strictness illogical, licence is limited merely to substitution of other dissyllabic feet for the pure iamb. In

> "Thus at their shady lodge arrived, *both stood,*
> *Both turned,*"

the rigid Johnson insists on the spondaic character, "the accent is on two syllables together and both strong"; while he would seem to regard "And when," in the line

> "And when we seek as now the gift of sleep,"

as a pyrrhic ("both syllables are weak"). A trochee ("deviation or inversion of accent") is allowed as a "mixture" in the first place, but elsewhere is "remarkably inharmonious," as, for instance, in Cowley's beautiful line,

> "And the soft wings of peace *cover* him round."

The next paper (88) passes, after touching other matters, to "elision," by which he means (evidently not even taking trisyllabic possibility into consideration) such a case as

> "Wisdom to folly as nourishment to wind."

This licence, he says, is now disused in English poetry; and adds some severe remarks on those who would revive or commend it. He even objects to the redundant ending in heroic poetry.

In the third paper (90) he comes to Pauses; and once more plays the rigour of the game. The English poet, in connecting one line with another, is *never* to make a full pause at less than three syllables from the beginning or end of a verse; and in all lines pause at the fourth or sixth syllable is best. He gives a whole paper to Milton's accommodation of the sound to the sense, and winds up his Miltonic exercitations, after a very considerable interval, with a set critique (139) of *Samson Agonistes*, partly on its general character as an Aristotelian tragedy (he decides that it has a beginning and end, but no middle, poor thing!) and partly on details. These papers show no *animus* against Milton. There are even expressions of admiration for him, which may be called enthusiastic. But they do show that the critic was not in range with his

author. Almost every one of his axioms and postulates is estionable.

On Spenser.

Of the remaining critical papers in the *Rambler* it is very important to notice No. 121, "On the Dangers of Imitation, and the Impropriety of imitating Spenser." Johnson's acuteness was not at fault in distrusting, from his point of view, the consequences of such things as the *Castle of Indolence* or even the *Schoolmistress;* and he addresses a direct rebuke to "the men of learning and genius" who have introduced the fashion.[1] In so far as his condemnation of "echoes" goes he is undoubtedly not wrong, and he speaks of the idol of Neo-Classicism, Virgil, with an irreverent *parrhesia*[2] which, like many other things in him, shows his true critical power. But on Spenser himself the other idols—the *idola specus* rather than *fori*—blind him. In following his namesake in the condemnation of Spenser's language he is, we may think, wrong; yet this at least is an arguable point. But in regard to the Spenserian stanza things are different. Johnson calls it "at once difficult and unpleasing; tiresome to the ear from its uniformity, and to the attention by its length," while he subsequently goes off into the usual error about imitating the Italians. No truce is here possible. That the Spenserian is not easy may be granted at once, but Johnson was certainly scholar enough to anticipate the riposte that, not here only, it is "hard to be good." As for "unpleasing," so much the worse for the ear which is not pleased by the most exquisite harmonic symphony in the long and glorious list of stanza-combinations. As for monotony, it is just as monotonous as flowing water. While as for the Italian parallel, nothing can probably be more to the glory of Spenser than this; just as nothing can be more different than the pretty, but cloying, rhyme even of Tasso, nay, sometimes even of Ariosto, and the endless unlaboured beauty of Spenser's rhyme-sound.

[1] He was no doubt thinking also of Gilbert West, in his *Life* of whom he introduces a *caveat* against West's Imitations of Spenser as "successful" indeed and "amusing," but "only pretty."

[2] "The warmest admirers of the great Mantuan poet can extol him for little more than the skill with which he has . . . united the beauties of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*," and he adds a longish exposure of the way in which Virgil, determined to imitate at all costs, has put in his borrowed matter without regard to keeping.

It is no valid retort that this is simply a difference of taste. If a man, as some men have done, says that Spenser is pleasing and Dryden and Pope are *not*, then the retort is valid. When the position is taken that *both* rhythms are pleasing, both really poetical, but poetical in a different way, the defender of it may laugh at all assailants.

On History and Letter-writing.

The criticism of the English historians which immediately follows has an interest chiefly of curiosity, because it was written just at the opening of the great age of the department with which it deals. Prejudices of different kinds would always have prevented Johnson from doing full justice to Robertson, to Hume, and, most of all, to Gibbon; but, as it is, he deals with nobody later than Clarendon, and merely throws back to Raleigh and Knolles. Very much the same drawback attends the criticism on Epistolary writing: for here also it was the lot of Johnson's own contemporaries, in work mostly not written, and hardly in a single case published, at the date of the *Rambler*, to remove the reproach of England. But the paper on Tragi-Comedy (156) is much more important.

On Tragi-comedy.

For here, as in other places, we see that Johnson, but for the combination of influences above referred to, might have taken high, if not the highest, degrees in a very different school of criticism. He puts the great rule *Nec quarta loqui* into the dustbin, with a nonchalance exhibiting some slight shortness of sight; for the very argument he uses will sweep with this a good many other rules to which he still adheres. "We violate it," he says coolly, "without scruple and without inconvenience." He is equally iconoclastic about the Five Acts, about the Unity of Time, while he blows rather hot and cold about tragi-comedy in the sense of the mixing of tragic and comic scenes. But the close of the paper is the most remarkable, for it is in effect the death-knell of the neo-classic system, sounded by its last really great prophet. "*It ought to be the first endeavour of a writer to distinguish nature from custom, or that which is established because it is right from that which is right only because it is established; that he may neither violate essential principles by a desire of novelty, nor debar himself from the attainment of beauties within his view by a needless fear*

of breaking rules which no literary dictator had authority to enact."

"Oh! the lands of Milnwood, the bonny lands of Milnwood, that have been in the name of Morton twa hundred years; they are barking and fleeing, infield and outfield, haugh and holme!" With this utterance, this single utterance, all the ruling doctrines of sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth century criticism receive notice to quit.[1]

"*Dick Minim.*"

The well-known "Dick Minim" papers in the *Idler* (60, 61) are excellent fun, and perhaps Johnson's chief accomplishment in the direction of humour. The growth of criticism in Dick, his gradual proficiency in all the critical commonplaces of his day (it is to be observed that Johnson, like all true humourists, does not spare himself, and makes one of Minim's *secrets de Polichinelle* a censure of Spenser's stanza), his addiction to Johnson's pet aversion, "suiting the sound to the sense," and his idolatry of Milton, are all capitally done. Indeed, like all good caricatures, the piece is a standing piece to consult for the fashions and creeds which it caricatures. But it neither contains nor suggests any points of critical doctrine that we cannot find elsewhere, and it is only indirectly serious.[2]

Rasselas.

The Dissertation upon Poetry of Imlac in *Rasselas* (chap. x.) may be less amusing; but it is of course much more serious. There can be no reasonable doubt that Imlac gives as much of Johnson's self as he chose to put, and could put, in character: while it is at least possible that his sentiments are determined in some degree by the menacing appearances of Romanticism. Imlac finds "with wonder that in almost all countries the most ancient poets are reputed the best"; that "early writers are in possession of nature and their successors of art"; that "no man was ever great by imitation"; that he must observe everything and observe for himself, but that he

[1] The chief remaining critical *loci* in the *Rambler* are the unlucky strictures in No. 168 on "dun," "knife," and "blanket" in *Macbeth* as "low"; and the remarks on unfriendly criticism in 176.

[2] There are, of course, other passages in the *Idler* touching on Criticism,—59 on the Causes of Neglect of Books, 68, 69 on Translation, 77 on "Essay Writing," 85 on Compilations. But they contain nothing of exceptional importance.

must do it on the principle of examining, "not the individual, but the species." He is to remark "general properties and large appearances. He does not number the streaks of the tulip or describe the different shapes in the verdure of the forest," but must "exhibit prominent and striking features," neglecting "minuter discriminations." In the same way his criticism of life must be abstracted and generalised; he must be "a being superior to time and place"; must know many languages and sciences; must by incessant practice of style "familiarise to himself every delicacy of speech and grace of harmony."

Surely a high calling and election! yet with some questionable points in it. If the poet must not count the streaks of the tulip, if he must merely generalise and sweep; if he must consult the laziness and dulness of his readers by merely portraying prominent and striking features, characteristics alike obvious to vigilance and carelessness—then even Dryden will not do, for he is too recondite and conceited. Pope alone must bear the bell. Lady Winchelsea's horse in twilight, the best part of a century earlier; Tennyson's ashbuds in the front of March, the best part of a century later, are equally "streaks of the tulip," superfluous if not even bad. Habington's picture of the pitiless northern sunshine on the ice-bound pilot, and Keats's of the perilous seas through the magic casements, must be rejected, as too unfamiliar and individual. The poetic strangeness and height are barred *en bloc*. Convention, familiarity, generalisation—these are the keys to the poetical kingdom of heaven. The tenant of Milnwood has a fresh enfeoffment!

The Shakespeare Preface.

The Shakespeare Preface is a specially interesting document, because of its illustration, not merely of Johnson's native critical vigour, not merely of his imbibed eighteenth-century prejudices, but of that peculiar position of compromise and reservation which, as we have said and shall say, is at once the condemnation and the salvation of the English critical position at this time. Of the first there are many instances, though perhaps none in the *Preface* itself quite equal to the famous note on the character of Polonius, which has been generally and justly taken as showing what

a triumph this failure of an edition might have been. Yet even here there is not a little which follows in the wake of Dryden's great eulogy, and some scattered observations of the highest acuteness, more particularly two famous sentences which, though Johnson's quotation is directed to a minor matter—Shakespeare's learning—settle beforehand, with the prophetic tendency of genius, the whole monstrous absurdity of the Bacon-Shakespeare theory.[1] The rest, however, is, if not exactly a zigzag of contradiction, at least the contrasted utterance of two distinct voices. Shakespeare has this and that merit of nature, of passion; but "his set speeches are commonly cold and weak." "What he does best he soon ceases to do." Johnson, here also, has no superstitious reverence for the Unities, and even speaks slightly of dramatic rules; nay, he suggests "the recall of the principles of the drama to a new examination," the very examination which Lessing was to give it. But he apologises for the period when "*The Death of Arthur* was the favourite volume," and hints a doubt whether much of our and his own praise of Shakespeare is not "given by custom and veneration." "He has corrupted language by every mode of depravation," yet Johnson echoes Dryden "when he describes anything you more than see it, you feel it too." A singular triumph of "depraved language." In short, throughout the piece it is now Johnson himself who is speaking, now some one with a certain bundle of principles or prejudices which Johnson chooses to adopt for the time.

The Lives of the Poets.

It was with these opinions on the formal and substantial nature of poetry and of criticism that Johnson, late in life, sat down to the *Lives of the Poets*,[2] one of the most fortunate books in English literature. In very few cases have task and artist been so happily associated. For

[1] "Jonson, . . . who besides that he had no imaginable temptation to falsehood, wrote at a time when the character and acquisitions of Shakespeare were known to multitudes. His evidence ought therefore to decide the controversy, unless some testimony of equal force could be opposed."

[2] With Johnson, as with some other writers, I have not thought it necessary to specify editions. I must, however, mention Mr J. H. Millar's issue of the *Lives* (London, 1896) for the sake of the excellent *Introduction* on Johnson's criticism.

almost all his authors, he had biographical knowledge such as no other living man had, and the access to which has long been closed. If, now and then, his criticism was not in touch with his subjects, this was rare: and the fact gave a certain value even to the assertions that result—for *we*, do what we will, cannot see Milton quite as Johnson saw him, and so his view is valuable as a corrective. By far the greater part of these subjects belonged to one school and system of English poetry, a school and system with which the critic was at once thoroughly familiar and thoroughly in sympathy. And, lastly, the form of the work, with its subdivision into a large number of practically independent and not individually burdensome sections, was well suited to coax a man who suffered from constitutional indolence, and who for many years had been relieved from that pressure of necessity which had conquered his indolence occasionally, and only occasionally, earlier. No other man, it is true, has had quite such a chance: but he must indeed have a sublime confidence, both in the strength of his principles and in the competence of his talents, who thinks that, if he had the chance, he could do the task better than Johnson did his.

Their general merits.

The work, of course, is by no means equal throughout: and it could not be expected to be. Some was merely old work, dating from a much less mature period of the writer's genius, and made to serve again. Some was on subjects so trivial that good nature, or simple indolence, or, if any one pleases, an artistic reluctance to break butterflies on so huge a wheel, made the criticisms almost as insignificant as the criticised. Here and there extra-literary prejudice—political-ecclesiastical, as in the case of Milton; partly moral, partly religious, and, it is to be feared, a little personal, as in that of Swift—distorted the presentation. And it is quite possible that a similar distortion, due to the same causes or others, was in the case of Gray intensified by a half-unconscious conviction that Gray's aims and spirit, if not his actual poetical accomplishments, were fatal to the school of poetry to which the critic himself held.

But make allowance for all this, and with how great a thing do the *Lives* still provide us! In that combination of biography

and criticism, which is so natural that it is wonderful it should be so late,[1] they are all but the originals, and are still almost the standard. They are full of anecdote, agreeably and crisply told, yet they never descend to mere gossip: their criticism of life is almost always just and sound, grave without being precise, animated by the same melancholy as that of the *Vanity of Human Wishes*, but in milder mood and with touches of brightness. Their criticism of literature is all the more valuable for being the criticism of their time. When we read Johnson's remarks on Milton's minor poems it is foolish to rave, and it is ignoble to sneer. The wise will rejoice in the opportunity to understand. So when Johnson bestows what seems to us extraordinary and unintelligible praise on John Pomfret's *Choice*,[2] he is really praising a moral tract couched in verse not unpleasing in itself, and specially pleasing to his ear. When he speaks less favourably of *Grongar Hill*, he is speaking of a piece of nature-poetry, not arranged on his principle of neglecting the streak of the tulip, and availing itself of those Miltonic licences of prosody which he disapproved. But we shall never find that, when the poetry is of the stamp which he recognises, he makes any mistake about its relative excellence: and we shall find that, in not a few cases, he is able to recognise excellence which belongs to classes and schools not exactly such as he approves. And, lastly, it has to be added that for diffused brilliancy of critical expression, subject to the allowances and conditions just given, the *Lives* are hardly to be excelled in any language. It is not safe to neglect one of them, though no doubt there are some six or seven which, for this reason or that, take precedence of the rest.

The "Cowley" has especial interest, because it is Johnson's

[1] There are blind attempts at it even in antiquity; but Dryden's Lives of Lucian and Plutarch are, like other things of his elsewhere, the real originals here.

[2] Let me draw special attention to "John." I once, unwittingly or carelessly, called him "Thomas," and I am afraid that I even neglected to correct the error in a second edition of the guilty book. A man who writes "Thomas" for "John," in the case of a minor poet, can, I am aware, possess no virtues, and must expect no pardon. But I shall always henceforth remember to call him "Pomfret, Mr *John*." "Let this expiate," as was remarked in another case of perhaps not less mortal sin.

only considerable attempt at that very important part of criticism, the historical summary of the characteristics of a poetical period or school. And, though far from faultless, it is so important and so interesting in its kind that it ranks with his greatest Essays. Only that singular impatience of literary history, as such, which characterised the late Mr Matthew Arnold, and which not infrequently marred his own critical work, can have prevented him from including, in his Johnsonian *points de repère*, the Essay which launched, and endeavoured to make watertight, the famous definition of the "Metaphysical" School—of the school represented earlier by Donne, and later by Cowley himself.

The Cowley.

The phrase itself[1] has been both too readily adopted and too indiscriminately attacked. Taken with the ordinary meaning of "metaphysical," it may indeed seem partly meaningless and partly misleading. Taken as Johnson meant it, it has a meaning defensible at least from the point of view of the framer, and very important in critical history. Johnson (it is too often forgotten) was a scholar; and he used "metaphysical" in its proper sense—of that which "comes after" the physical or natural. Now, it was, as we have seen, the whole principle of his school of criticism—their whole critical contention—that *they* were "following nature." The main objection to the poetry of what Dryden calls the "last Age"—what we call, loosely but conveniently, "Elizabethan" poetry—was that its ideas, and still more its expressions, went beyond and behind nature, substituted afterthoughts and unreal refinements for fact. It would be delightful to the present writer to defend the Metaphysicals here—but it would not be to the question.

Political and religious prejudice accounts, as has been said, for much in the *Milton*. But it will not fully account for the facts. The at first sight astonishing, and already often referred to, criticisms on the minor poems show a perfectly honest and genuine dislike to the form as well as to the matter, to the manner as well as to the man. If Johnson

The Milton.

[1] It was of course probably suggested by Dryden (*Essay on Satire*, "Donne . . . affects the metaphysics"), but in Johnson's hands is much altered and extended.

calls *Lycidas* "harsh," it is because he simply does not hear its music; he can even call the songs in *Comus* "not very musical in their numbers." When of the, no doubt unequal but often splendid, sonnets he can write, "of the best it can only be said that they are not bad," he gives us the real value of his criticism immediately afterwards by laying it down that "the fabric of a sonnet, however adapted to the Italian language, has *never* succeeded in ours." And when he has earlier stated that "all that short compositions can commonly attain is sweetness and elegance," we see in this the whole thing. Milton is condemned under statute (though the statute is hopelessly unconstitutional and unjust) on certain counts; on others his judge, though capable and perfectly honest, does not know the part of the code which justifies the accused. Johnson is listening for couplet-music or stanzas with regular recurrence of rhyme, for lines constituted entirely on a dissyllabic, or entirely on a trisyllabic, basis. He does not find these things: and he has no organ to judge what he does find.

The Dryden *and* Pope.

With the lives of Dryden and Pope we are clear of all difficulties, and the critic is in his element. The poets whom he is criticising occupy the same platform as he does; they have in fact been themselves the architects of that platform. There is no fear of the initial incompatibilities which, when aggravated by accident, lead to the apparent enormities of the *Milton* Essay, and which, even when not so aggravated, condition the usefulness, though they may positively increase the interest, of the *Cowley*. But there is more than this. In no instance, perhaps, was Johnson so well in case to apply his biographical and critical treatment as in regard to Dryden and Pope. With the latter he had himself been contemporary; and when he first came to London the traditions even of the former were still fresh, while there were many still living (Southerne the chief of them) who had known glorious John well. Further, Johnson's peculiar habits of living, his delight in conversation and society, his excellent memory, and his propensity to the study of human nature, as well as of letters, furnished him abundantly with opportunities. Yet, again, his sympathy with both, on general literary sides, was not unhappily mixed

and tempered by a slight, but not uncharitable or Puritanic, disapproval of their moral characters, by regret at Dryden's desertion of the Anglican Church, and at the half-Romanist half-freethinking attitude of Pope to religion.

The result of all this is a pair of the best critical Essays in the English language. Individual expressions will of course renew for us the sense of difference in the point of view. We shall not agree that Dryden "found English poetry brick and left it marble," and we shall be only too apt to take up the challenge, "If Pope be not a poet, where is poetry to be found?" even if we think the implied denial, to which the challenge was a reply, an absurdity. And we may find special interest as well as special difference in the condemnation even of these masters for attempting Pindarics, because Pindarics "want the essential constituent of metrical compositions, the stated recurrence of settled numbers," seeing in it a fresh instance of that Procrustean tyranny of suiting the form to the bed, not the bed to the form, which distinguishes all neo-classic criticism. But these points occur rarely. The criticism, as a whole, is not merely perfectly just on its own scheme, but requires very little allowance on others; nor, in the difficult and dangerous art of comparative censorship, will any example be found much surpassing Johnson's parallel of the two poets.

The Collins *and* Gray.

In the *Milton* and the *Cowley* we find Johnson dealing with schools of poetry which he regards as out of date and imperfect; in the *Dryden* and the *Pope*, with subjects which are not to him subjects of any general controversy, but which he can afford to treat almost entirely on their merits. In the *Collins* and the *Gray* we find a new relation between poet and critic—the relation of decided, though not yet wholly declared, innovation on the part of the poets, and of conscious, though not yet quite wide-eyed and irreconcilable, hostility on the part of the critic. The expression of this is further differentiated by the fact that Johnson regarded Collins with the affection of a personal friend, and the generous sympathy of one who, with all his roughness, had a mind as nearly touched by mortal sorrows as that of any sentimentalist; while it is pretty clear, though we have no positive

evidence for it, that he reciprocated the personal and political dislike which Gray certainly felt for him.

The result was, in the case of Collins, a criticism rather inadequate than unjust, and not seldom acute in its indication of faults, if somewhat blind to merits; in that of Gray, one which cannot be quite so favourably spoken of, though the censure which has been heaped upon it—notably by Lord Macaulay and Mr Arnold—seems to me very far to surpass its own injustice. Johnson's general summing up—that Gray's "mind had a large grasp; his curiosity[1] was unlimited, and his judgment cultivated; he was likely to love much where he loved at all, but fastidious and hard to please"—is acute, just, and far from ungenerous. That on the Elegy—"The four stanzas beginning, 'Yet even these bones,' are to me original; I have never seen the notions in any other place. Yet he that reads them here persuades himself that he has always felt them. Had Gray written often thus, it had been vain to blame and useless to praise him"—is a magnificent and monumental compliment, said as simply as "Good morning." He is absolutely right when he says that in all Gray's Odes "there is a kind of cumbrous splendour that we wish away," for there never was such an abuser of "poetic diction" (to be a poet) as Gray was. Yet undoubtedly the Essay is not satisfactory; it has not merely, as the *Collins* has, blindness, but, what the *Collins* has not, that obvious *denigration*, that determination to pick holes, which always vitiates a critique, no matter what learning and genius be bestowed on it. And the probable reasons of this are interesting. It has been said that they were possibly personal in part. We know that Gray spoke rudely of Johnson; and there were many reasons why Johnson might rather despise Gray, though he certainly should not have called him "dull."

On the whole, however, I have little doubt—and it is this which gives the essay its real interest for me—that one main reason of Johnson's antipathy to Gray's poetry was the same as that for which we like it. He suspected, if he did not fully perceive, the romantic snake in Gray's classically waving grass.

[1] It must be remembered that this word had no unfavourable connotation with Johnson. It meant intelligent and scholarly interest.

And he had on his own grounds good reason for suspecting it. Gray might use Greek and Latin tags almost extravagantly. But he sedulously eschewed the couplet; and, while preferring lyric, he chose lyrical forms which, though Johnson was too much of a scholar to dare to call them irregular, violated his own theories of the prompt and orderly recurrence of rhyme, and the duty of maintaining a length of line as even as possible. The sense of nature, the love of the despised "prospect," was everywhere; even the forbidden "streak of the tulip" might be detected. And, lastly, Gray had too obvious leanings to classes of subject and literature which lay outside of the consecrated range—early English and French, Welsh, Norse, and the like. It is no real evidence of critical incapacity, but of something quite the reverse, that Johnson should have disliked Gray. He spied the great Romantic beard under the Pindaric and Horatian muffler—and he did not like it.

The critical greatness of the Lives *and of Johnson.*

On the whole, it may be safely said that, however widely a man may differ from Johnson's critical theory, he will, provided that he possesses some real tincture of the critical spirit himself, think more and more highly of the *Lives of the Poets* the more he reads them, and the more he compares them with the greater classics of critical literature. As a book, they have not missed their due meed of praise; as a critical book, one may think that they have. The peculiarity of their position as a body of direct critical appraisement of the poetical work of England for a long period should escape no one. But the discussion of them, which possesses, and is long likely to possess, prerogative authority as coming from one who was both himself a master of the craft and a master of English, admirable and delightful as it is and always will be, is not, critically speaking, quite satisfactory. Mr Arnold speaks of the Six Lives which he selected in very high terms: but he rather pooh-poohs the others, and, even in regard to the chosen Six, he puts upon himself—and in his amiable, but for all that exceedingly peremptory, way, insists in putting on his readers—a huge pair of blinkers. We are to regard the late seventeenth and the whole of the eighteenth century as an Age of Prose: and we are to regard Johnson,

whether he was speaking of the poets of this age or of others, as the spokesman of an age of prose. Far be it from me to deny that there is an element of truth in this: but it is not the whole truth, and the critic must strive, though he may not boast, to "find the whole."

The whole truth, as it seems to me, about Johnson is that he was very much more than the critic of an age of prose, though he was not (who has been? even Longinus? even Coleridge?)

> "The King who ruled, as he thought fit,
> The universal monarchy of wit"

as regards poetic criticism. He saw far beyond prose, as in those few words of the concluding and reconciling eulogy of Gray which have been quoted above. It is poetry and not prose which has the gift of putting new things so that the man who reads them ingenuously thinks that they are merely a neat statement of what he has always thought. And Johnson was far more than merely a critic of the eighteenth-century Neo-Classic theory, though he was this. A most noteworthy passage in the *Rambler* (No. 156), which I have purposely kept for comment in this place, though it is delivered on the wrong side, shows us, as the great critics always do show us, what a range of sight the writer had. In this he expresses a doubt whether we ought "to judge genius merely by the event," and, applying this to Shakespeare, takes the odd, but for an eighteenth-century critic most tell-tale and interesting, line that if genius succeeds by means which are wrong according to rule, we may think higher of the genius but less highly of the work. It is hardly necessary to point out that this is, though in no way a discreditable, a transparent evasion of the difficulty which is pressing on the defenders of the Rules. "Show me," one may without irreverence retort, "thy genius without thy works; and I will show thee my genius by my works." If Shakespeare shows genius in neglecting the Rules, the inexorable voice of Logic, greater than Fortune, greater than all other things save Fate, will point out that the Rules are evidently not necessary, and, with something like the Lucretian *Te sequar*, will add, "Then for what *are* they necessary?" But Johnson's power is only a little soured and

not at all quenched by this. He has seen what others refused —perhaps were unable—to see, and what some flatly denied,— that a process of literary judgment "by the event" is possible, and that its verdicts, in some respects at any rate, cannot be challenged or reversed. These great critical *aperçus*, though sometimes delivered half unwillingly or on the wrong side, establish Johnson's claim to a place not often to be given to critics; but they do not establish it more certainly than his surveys of his actual subjects. It was an unfortunate consequence of Mr Arnold's generous impatience of all but "the chief and principal things," and of his curious dislike to literary history as such, that he should have swept away the minor Lives. One may not care for Stepney or Yalden, Duke or King, much more, or at all more, than he did. But with a really great member of the craft his admissions and omissions, his paradoxes, his extravagances, his very mistakes pure and simple, are all critically edifying. How does he apply his own critical theory? is what we must ask: and, with Johnson, I think we shall never ask it in vain.

His idea of English poetry was the application to certain classes of subjects, not rigidly limited to, but mainly arranged by, the canons of the classical writers—of what seemed to him and his generation the supreme form of English language and metre, brought in by Mr Waller and perfected by Mr Pope, yet not so as to exclude from admiration the *Allegro* of Milton and the *Elegy* of Gray. We may trace his applications of this, if we have a real love of literature and a real sense of criticism, nearly as profitably and pleasantly in relation to John Pomfret as in relation to Alexander Pope. We may trace his failures (as we are pleased, quite rightly in a way, to call them), the failures arising from the inadequacy, not of his genius, but of his scheme, not less agreeably in relation to Dyer than in relation to Dryden. We are not less informed by his passing the *Castle of Indolence* almost *sub silentio* than we are by that at first sight astounding criticism of *Lycidas*. This Cæsar never does wrong but with just cause—to use the phrase which was too much for the equanimity or the intelligence of his great namesake Ben,

in the work of one whom both admired yet could not quite stomach.

Now, this it is which makes the greatness of a critic. That Johnson might have been greater still at other times need not necessarily be denied; though it is at least open to doubt whether any other time would have suited his whole disposition better. But, as he is, he is great. The critics who deserve that name are not those who, like, for instance, Christopher North and Mr Ruskin, are at the mercy of different kinds of caprice—with whom you must be always on the *qui vive* to be certain what particular watchword they have adopted, what special side they are taking. It may even be doubted whether such a critic as Lamb, though infinitely delightful, is exactly "great" because of the singular gaps and arbitrariness of his likes and dislikes. Nay, Hazlitt, one of the greatest critics of the world on the whole, goes near to forfeit his right to the title by the occasional outbursts of almost insane prejudice that cloud his vision. Johnson is quite as prejudiced; but his prejudice is not in the least insane. His critical calculus is perfectly sound on its own postulates and axioms; and you have only to apply checks and correctives (which are easily ascertained, and kept ready) to adjust it to absolute critical truth. And, what is more, he has not merely flourished and vapoured critical abstractions, but has left us a solid reasoned body of critical judgment; he has not judged literature in the exhausted receiver of mere art, and yet has never neglected the artistic criterion; he has kept in constant touch with life, and yet has never descended to mere gossip. We may freely disagree with his judgments, but we can never justly disable his judgment; and this is the real criterion of a great critic.

Minor Criticism: Periodical and other.

Johnson is so much the eighteenth-century orthodox critic in quintessence (though, as I have tried to show, in transcendence also) that he will dispense us from saying very much more about the rank and file, the ordinary or inferior examples, of the kind. If we were able to devote this Book, or even this volume, to the subject of the present chapter, there would be no lack of material. Critical exercitations of a kind formed now, of course, a regular part of

the work of literature, and a very large part of its hack-work. The *Gentleman's Magazine* devoted much attention to the subject; and for a great part of the century two regular *Reviews*, the *Critical* and the *Monthly*,[1] were recognised organs of literary censorship, and employed some really eminent hands, notably Smollett and Goldsmith. The periodicals which, now in single spies, now (about the middle of the century) in battalions, endeavoured to renew the success of the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, were critical by kind; and dozens, scores, hundreds probably, of separate critical publications, large and small, issued from the press.[2] But, with the rarest exceptions, they must take the *non*-benefit of the warning which was laid down in the Preface to the First Volume. Something we must say of Goldsmith; then we may take two contrasted examples, Knox and Scott of Amwell, of the critic in Johnson's last days who inclined undoubtingly to the classical, and of the critic of the same time who had qualms and stirrings of Romanticism, but was hardly yet a heretic. And then, reserving summary, we may close the record.

[1] Johnson's relative estimates of the two (*Boswell*, Globe ed., pp. 186, 364) are well known; as is his apology for the *Critical* Reviewers' habit [he had been one himself] of not reading the books through, as the "duller" *Monthly* fellows were glad to do. Later generations have perhaps contrived to be dull *and* not to read.

[2] For instance, here is one which I have hunted for years—*Essay on the New Species of Writing founded by Fielding, with a word or two on Modern Criticism* (London? 1751). The better-known *Canons of Criticism* of Thomas Edwards (4th ed., London, 1750) may serve as a specimen of another kind. It is an attack on Warburton's *Shakespeare*, uncommonly shrewd in all senses of the word, but, as Johnson (*Boswell*, Globe ed., p. 87 note) justly enough said, of the gad-fly kind mainly. A curious little book, which I do not remember to have seen cited anywhere, is the *Essay upon Poetry and Painting* of Charles Lamotte (Dudlin (*sic*), 1742), La Motte, who was an F.S.A., a D.D., and chaplain to the Duke of Montagu, and who has the still rarer honour of not appearing in the *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, never, I think, refers to his namesake, but quotes Voltaire and Du Bos frequently. He is very anxious for "propriety" in all senses, and seems a little more interested in Painting than in Poetry. As to the latter, he is a good example of the devouring appetite for sense and fact which had seized on the critics of this time (save a few rebels) throughout Europe. The improbabilities of Tasso and of "Camoenus, the Homer and Virgil of the Portuguese," afflict him more, because they amuse him less, than they do in Voltaire's own case, and to any liberty with real or supposed history he is simply Rhadamanthine. "That which jars with probability—that which shocks Sense and Reason—can never be excused in Poetry." Mrs Barbauld and *The Ancient Mariner* sixty years before date!

Of Goldsmith as a critic little need be said, though his pen was not much less prolific in this than in other departments. But the angel is too often absent, and Poor Poll distressingly in evidence. The *Inquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe* is simply "prodigious." It is admirably written—Macaulay owes something to its style, which he only hardened and brazened. The author apes the fashionable philosophastering of the time, and throws in cheap sciolism like the prince of journalists that he was. It is almost always interesting; it is, where it touches life, not literature, sometimes excellently acute; but there is scarcely a critical dictum in it which is other than ridiculous. So in the *Citizen of the World* the Author's Club is of course delightful; but why should a sneer at Drayton have been put in the mouth of Lien Chi Altangi? And the miscellaneous Essays, including the *Bee*, which contain so much of Goldsmith's best work, are perhaps the best evidences of his nullity here. When one thinks how little it would cost anybody of Goldsmith's genius (to find such an one I confess would cost more) to write a literary parallel to the magnificent *Reverie*, which would be even finer, it is enough to draw iron tears down the critic's cheek. Goldsmith on Taste, Poetry, Metaphor, &c.,[1] is still the Goldsmith of the *Inquiry*. His "Account of the Augustan Age,"[2] though much better, and (unless I mistake) resorted to by some recent critics as a source of criticism different from that mostly prevalent in the nineteenth century, has all the limitations of its own period. And the Essay on Versification,[3] though it contains expressions which, taken by themselves, might seem to show that Goldsmith had actually emancipated himself from the tyranny of the fixed number of syllables, contains others totally irreconcilable with these, supports English hexameters and sapphics,[4] and as a whole forces on us once more the reluctant belief that he simply had no clear ideas, no accurate knowledge, on the subject.

Goldsmith.

[1] Essays, xii.-xvii.

[2] *The Bee*, viii.

[3] Essay xviii.

[4] It is perhaps only fair to hope that this fancy, as later with Southey and others, was a blind motion for freedom. Yet Goldsmith commits himself to the hemistich theory of decasyllables.

Vicesimus Knox[1] is a useful figure in this critical Transition Period. A scholar and a schoolmaster, he had some of the advantages of the first state and some of the defects of the less gracious second, accentuated in both cases by the dying influences of a "classical" tradition which had not the slightest idea that it was moribund. He carries his admiration for Pope to such a point as to assure us somewhere that Pope was a man of exemplary piety and goodness, while Gay was "uncontaminated with the vices of the world," which is really more than somewhat blind, and more than a little kind, even if we admit that it is wrong to call Pope a bad man, and that Gay had only tolerable vices. He thinks, in his Fourteenth Essay on the "Fluctuations of Taste," that the Augustans "arrived at that standard of perfection which," &c.; that the imitators of Ariosto, Spenser, and the smaller poems of Milton are "pleasingly uncouth" [compare Scott, *infra*, on the metrical renaissance of Dyer], depreciates Gray, and dismisses the Elegy as "a confused heap of splendid ideas"; is certain that Milton's sonnets "bear no mark of his genius," and in discussing the versions of "the sensible[2] Sappho" decides that Catullus is much inferior to — Philips! "The Old English Poets [Essay Thirty-Nine] are deservedly forgotten." Chaucer, Gower, Lydgate, and Occleve "seem to have thought that rhyme was poetry, and even this constituent they applied with extreme negligence" — the one charge which is unfair against even Occleve, and which, in reference to Chaucer, is proof of utter ignorance. Patriotism probably made him more favourable to Dunbar, Douglas, and Lyndsay, though he groans over the necessity of a glossary in their case also. In fact, Knox is but a Johnson without the genius. Let it, however, be counted to him for righteousness that he defended classical education, including verse-writing, against its enemies, who even then imagined vain things.

Vicesimus Knox.

John Scott of Amwell, once praised by good wits, now much forgotten, was a very respectable critic and a poet of "glimmer-

[1] *Essays, Moral and Literary*, 2nd ed., London, 1774, 8vo.

[2] This is perhaps the most delightful instance in (English) existence of the change which has come over the meaning of the word.

Scott of Amwell.

ings." In fact, I am not at all sure that he does not deserve to be promoted and postponed to the next volume, as a representative of the rising, not the falling, tide. His Essays on poetry[1] exhibit in a most interesting way the "know-not-what-to-think-of-it" state of public opinion about the later years of Johnson. He defends *Lycidas* against the Dictator; yet he finds fault with the "daystar" for acting both as a person and an orb of radiance, and admits the "incorrectness" of the poem, without giving us a hint of the nature or authority of "correctness." He boldly attacks the consecrated *Cooper's Hill*, and sets the rival eminence of Grongar against it, pronouncing Dyer "a sublime but strangely neglected poet," yet picking very niggling holes in this poet himself. He often anticipates, and oftener seems to be going to anticipate, Wordsworth, who no doubt owed him a good deal; yet he thinks Pope's famous epigram on Wit "the most concise and just definition of Poetry." In *Grongar Hill* itself he thinks the "admixture of metre [its second, certainly, if not its first great charm] rather displeasing to a nice ear"; and though he defends Gray against Knox, he is altogether yea-nay about *Windsor Forest*, and attacks Thomson's personifications, without remembering that Gray is at least an equal sinner, and without giving the author of the *Seasons*, and still more of the *Castle of Indolence*, any just compensation for his enthusiasm of nature. In fact, Scott is a man walking in twilight, who actually sees the line of dawn, but dares not step out into it.

[1] *Critical Essays*, London, 1785, 8vo.

CHAPTER II.

THE CONTEMPORARIES OF VOLTAIRE.

CLOSE CONNECTION OF FRENCH SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURY CRITICISM: FONTENELLE—EXCEPTIONAL CHARACTER OF HIS CRITICISM —HIS ATTITUDE TO THE "ANCIENT AND MODERN" QUARREL — THE 'DIALOGUES DES MORTS' — OTHER CRITICAL WORK — LA MOTTE — HIS "UNITY OF INTEREST"—ROLLIN—BRUMOY—RÉMOND DE SAINT-MARD—L. RACINE—DU BOS—STIMULATING BUT DESULTORY CHARACTER OF HIS 'RÉFLEXIONS' — MONTESQUIEU — VOLTAIRE: DISAPPOINTMENT OF HIS CRITICISM — EXAMPLES OF IT — CAUSES OF HIS FAILURE — OTHERS: BUFFON — "STYLE AND THE MAN" — VAUVENARGUES — BATTEUX — HIS ADJUSTMENT OF RULES AND TASTE—HIS INCOMPLETENESS—MARMONTEL — ODDITIES AND QUALITIES OF HIS CRITICISM — OTHERS: THOMAS, SUARD, ETC.—LA HARPE—HIS 'COURS DE LITTÉRATURE'—HIS CRITICAL POSITION AS "ULTIMUS SUORUM"—THE ACADEMIC ESSAY—RIVAROL.

Close connection of French seventeenth and eighteenth century criticism. Fontenelle.

THE later seventeenth and at least the earlier eighteenth century in France are perhaps more closely connected than any other literary periods, if, indeed, they are not practically one, like the two halves of our own so-called "Elizabethan" time. And this connection we can duly demonstrate, as far as criticism is concerned. Boileau himself outlived the junction of the centuries by more than a decade: and the birth of Voltaire preceded it by more than a lustrum. The Quarrel of Ancients and Moderns—a very poor thing certainly — revived in the new century, as if on purpose to show the connection with the old. And, lastly, the prolonged life of one remarkable and representative critic was almost equally distributed over the two. Fontenelle is one of the most interesting, if not exactly one of the most important, figures

in our whole long gallery; and if he has never yet held quite his proper place in literary history, this is due to the facts, first, that he was a critic more than he was anything else; and, secondly, that he forgot the great "Thou shalt not" which Criticism lays upon her sons, and would lay (if she had any) on her daughters. No critic is in the least bound to produce good work, or any work, of the constructive kind: but he is bound not to produce that which is not good. The author of *Aspar* and the *Lettres du Chevalier d'Her . . .* forgot this, and paid the penalty.[1]

Exceptional character of his criticism.

Yet his attractions are so great that few people who have paid him much attention have failed to be smitten with them. M. Rigault,[2] who does not approve of him generally, is a conspicuous example of this. But what we must look to is what he has actually written himself. His utterances are almost too tempting. In such a book as this the expatiation which they invite must be perforce denied them. Yet one may break proportion a little in order to do something like justice to a critic whose like, for suggestiveness, delicacy, and range, we shall hardly meet in the French eighteenth century. It is indeed curious that of the three men of his own earliest years from whom Voltaire inherits—Saint-Evremond, Hamilton, and Fontenelle—every one should have surpassed him in the finer traits, while all fall short of him in force and, as he himself said, *diable au corps*. Saint-Evremond we have dealt with; Hamilton[3] does not come into our story. Fontenelle is for the moment ours.

It must be confessed that he is an elusive if an agreeable possession. From wisdom, from worldly-wisdom, from whim, or from what not, he seems to have wished to be an enigma; and—to borrow one of Scott's great sentences—"the wish of his heart was granted to his loss, and the hope of his pride has destroyed him"—at least has certainly made him rank lower than he would otherwise have ranked. However *délié*—to use

[1] The standard edition of Fontenelle (8 vols., Paris, 1790) is an agreeable book, excellent in print and paper.

[2] *Op. cit. sup.*, especially Part I., chaps. ix. and xi.

[3] Though there is a good deal of the critical spirit in him, too, and the famous advice to "Bélier, mon ami" has fellows of critical application.

a word of his own language for which we have no single English equivalent—however watchful, mercurial, sensitive the reader's spirit may be, he will, over and over again in Fontenelle, meet passages where he cannot be sure whether his author is writing merely with tongue in cheek, or applying an all-dissolving irony, hardly inferior to Swift's in power, and almost superior in quietness and subtlety. Moreover, his critical position is a very peculiar one, and constantly liable to be misunderstood—if, indeed, it be not safer to say that it is almost always difficult to apprehend with any certainty of escaping misprision. The good folk who magisterially rebuke Dryden as to *Gorboduc*, because he made mistakes about the form of the verse and the sex of the person—even those (one regrets to say this includes M. Rigault himself) who are shocked at that great critic's laudatory citations of, and allusions to, Le Bossu—need never hope to understand Fontenelle.

His attitude to the "Ancient and Modern" Quarrel.

Few things (except that he was the author of that *Plurality of Worlds* which happily does not concern us) are better known concerning him than that he was a champion of the Moderns. Yet, when we come to examine his numerous and elusive writings on the subject, the one principle of his that does emerge is a principle which, if it chastises the Ancients with whips, chastises the Moderns with scorpions. A man writing, as M. Rigault wrote, in 1856, would have been a wonderful person if he had not been misled by the great idol of Progress. But Fontenelle was at least as far from the delusion as he was from the date. His argument is just the contrary—that as human wisdoms and human follies, human powers and human weaknesses, are always the same, it is absurd to suppose that any one period can have general and intrinsic superiority over any other.

The Dialogues des Morts.

Assuredly no "modern," whether of his days or of our own, can find aught but confusion of face in the quiet axiom of Laura at the end of her controversy with Sappho,[1] "Croyez moi, après qu'on a bien raisonné ou sur l'amour, ou sur telle autre matière qu'on voudra, on

[1] *Œuvres*, ed. cit., i. 234.

trouve au bout du compte que les choses sont bien comme elles sont, et que la réforme qu'on prétendroit y apporter gâterait tout." *Pulveris exigui jactus!* but one with a fatally magical effect in the quarrels of criticism as of other things. And the same is the lesson of the dialogue which follows immediately—the best of the whole, and almost a sovereign document of our library,—that between Socrates and Montaigne. Not only is there no example in the literature of the dialogue, from Plato to Mr Traill, much more apt than the "maieutic" feat of Socrates, by which he induces Montaigne to commit himself to the dogma, "Partout où il y a des hommes, il y a des sottises, et les mêmes sottises"; but the rest of the piece is as powerfully, though as quietly, worked out as this crisis of it. There is no Progress; there is no Degeneration. The distribution may vary: the sum will not. Erasistratus maintains the same thesis on a different matter a little later in his dialogue with Harvey,[1] laying down the doctrine, outrageous to all the Royal Societies of the world (though they were glad to welcome Fontenelle as populariser, and have perhaps never had such an one since, except Mr Huxley), that "the things which are not necessary perhaps do get discovered in the course of ages, the others not." And Charles V. preaches no very different sermon when he "makes a hare" of Erasmus by pointing out to that dilettante republican that *les biens de l'esprit* are just as much things of time and chance as crown and sceptre.[2]

Other critical work.

It is, however, in Fontenelle's actual concrete deliverances of criticism that the resemblance to Dryden comes in most. Those who insist that such deliverances shall be Medic-Persian, unalterable, mathematical, true without relation and adjustment, will not like him. To take his utterances down in a notebook, and reproduce them at the next examination (to provide for which process seems to be held the be-all and end-all of modern criticism), would not do at all. When Fontenelle praises Corneille at the expense of Racine, you have to think whether he is speaking what he thinks or merely as *le neveu de son oncle;* when he says other

[1] *Œuvres*, i. 249.

[2] Ibid., p. 270. The *Dialogues*, it should perhaps be said, appeared first as early as 1683.

things, whether he is a "Modern" at the time and to the extent of saying something which he knows will cause the "Ancients" grinding torments; when he sketches[1] a theory of poetic criticism of the most sweeping *a priori* kind from Principles of Beauty down through Kinds to Rules, whether he really means this, or is conciliating somebody, or laughing in his sleeve at somebody, or the like. But this—at least for some tastes—only adds piquancy to his observations, and they have now and then surprising justice, freshness, freedom from the prejudices of time, country, and circumstance. The *Histoire du Théâtre Français*, for instance, which he has prefixed to his *Vie de Corneille*, may be based on second-hand information, and, with our fuller knowledge, it may not be very hard to pick holes in it. But it is an extraordinary production for a representative man of letters at a time when hardly any such man, in any country of Europe, was free from ignorant contempt of the early vernaculars. The brief eleven-articled "parallel between Racine and Corneille" is of course somewhat partisan; but it will give the partisans on the other side some trouble to prove it unjust. The "Remarks on Aristophanes," and on the Greek theatre generally, are obviously "modern" and intended to tease; but they are uncommonly shrewd, and so are the *Réflexions sur la Poétique* and those on "Poetry in General." It is wonderful that even an antagonist of Boileau, and a sworn paradoxer, should, at this time, have been able to see the beauty of the Père Le Moyne's splendid couplet on the Sicilian Vespers,—

> "Quand du Gibel ardent les noires Euménides
> Sonneront de leur cor ces Vêpres homicides,"—

where we are more than half-way from Du Bartas and Aubigné to Victor Hugo. The mere image—this new "vision of the guarded mount," with the black Furies silhouetted against the flaming cone, and the explosions of the volcano deepening the bugle-call to massacre—is fine: the means taken to make it poetical are finer. The use of the proper names, and the cunning arrangement of epithet and noun in *noires Euménides* and *Vêpres homicides*, and the sharp blasts of the long and

[1] Ed. cit., iii. 1-67.

short *o*'s in the second line, are more than Hugonian, they are positively Miltonic: and the couplet will serve to keep a man in Mr Arnold's "torpid and dismal" stage of later middle life cheerful for an evening, and whensoever he remembers it afterwards. True, Fontenelle admits demurely that he knows "vespers" and "Eumenides" are something of an anachronism in conjunction, and proposes a slight alteration to suit this objection of "correctness." But this is his way; and the wonderful thing is that he should have admired it at all—should have actually tasted this heady wine of poetry. As he finishes the paragraph in his own quaint style,[1] "Il était bien aisé, même à de grands poètes, de ne pas trouver" this couplet: and in his time it would have been still easier even for great critics not to do justice to it, and not to see that it is to these things "so easy for the poet not to find" that it is the critic's business to look.

The general remarks on Comedy which he prefixed to a collection of his efforts in that kind are not negligible; but in those on Eclogue,[2] and still more in the *Digression sur Les Anciens et Les Modernes*, the curse, or at least the gainsaying, of the Quarrel is upon him, and the main drift is not merely digressive but aggressive and excessive. In the *Digression* he anticipates (as he did in so many things) the materialist-rationalist explanations of the later eighteenth century by climate, fibres of the brain, &c. Here he becomes scientific, and therefore necessarily ceases to be of importance in literature.

But he always regains that importance before long—in his Discourse of the Origin of Fable, in his Academic Discourses and Replies, in many a fragment and isolated remark. Even in his *Eloges*—mostly devoted (there are nearly two volumes of them) to scientific personages from Leibniz and Newton downwards—the unconquerable critical power of the man shows itself, subject to the limitations noted. The world is some-

[1] Ed. cit., iii. 181.

[2] As if, however, to show that one must never speak of Fontenelle without reserves, there are some extremely interesting things here also. For instance, the characteristic *malice*, with a serious and sensible side to it, of the law that the sentiments and language of the artificial pastoral shall bear the same relation to nature as *ces habits que l'on prend dans des ballets pour représenter les paysans.*

times not allowed to know anything of its greatest critics, and Fontenelle is an example of this. But those who have won something of that knowledge of criticism which it is the humble purpose of this book to facilitate, will not slight the man who, at the junction of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, could flirt in the face of Ancients and Moderns alike the suggestion (which Mr Rigmarole doubtless borrowed from him) that all times are "pretty much like our own," and could see and hear the sable sisters sounding the tocsin on the flaming crest of Mongibel.

La Motte.

Fontenelle is elusive, but comprehensible by the imagination. La Motte,[1] his inseparable companion in the renewed sacrilege of the Moderns, seems an easier, but is really a harder, personage to lay hold of. It is indeed not extremely difficult to explain his attitude to the Ancients by the fact that he knew no Greek; and his exaltation of prose by a consciousness (wherein he has left a family by no means extinct) that his own verses were worth very little. But it is so easy not to write verses if you cannot; and not to write about Greek if you do not know it! And the problem is further complicated by the facts that at least some judges, who are not exactly the first comers, such as Fontenelle himself and Voltaire, maintained that La Motte *could* write verses,—and that, so far from being "a fellow who had failed," he had obtained the greatest scenic success of the early eighteenth century with *Inès de Castro*, and, what is more, had deserved it. But for once, as also again in Pope's case, the dangerous explanation of physical defects and constitutional weakness seems to have some validity. The invulnerable nonchalance of his friend Fontenelle had met the damnation of *Aspar* by a cool tearing up of the piece, and an undismayed advance upon the fate of the *plusquam semel damnatus;* La Motte, at twenty or at little more, felt the similar misfortune of *Les Originaux* so severely that he actually went to La Trappe for a time. Before middle life he was blind and a cripple. The irritability which did not show itself in his temper (for he was the most amiable of

[1] My copy is the *Œuvres* (Paris, 1754) in 10 vols. (the first divided into two parts).

men) would seem to have transferred itself to his literary attitude, not affecting his politeness of expression, but inducing a sort of "rash" of paradox.

His "Unity of Interest."

To trace the vagaries of this might not be unamusing, but would certainly be excessive here. La Motte, it seems to me, had considerably less natural literary taste than Fontenelle; and of the controversy[1] (it was not his antagonist's fault if it was not a very acrimonious one) between him and Madame Dacier one cannot say much more than that the lady is very aggressive, very erudite, and very unintelligent; the gentleman very suave, rather ignorant, and of an intelligence better, but not much better, directed; while both are sufficiently distant from any true critical point of view. Yet once, as was not unnatural in the case of a very clever man who was at least endeavouring to form independent conclusions, La Motte did hit upon a great critical truth when,[2] discussing the Three Unities, he laid it down that there is after all only *one* Unity which is of real importance, and that this is the "Unity of Interest," to which all the others are subsidiary, and but as means to an end. "Self-evident," some one may say; but in how many critics have we found the fact acknowledged hitherto? and by how many has it been frankly acknowledged since? That the aim of the poet is to please, to satisfy the thirst for pleasure—that is to say, to interest—all but the extremest ethical prudery will admit. But critics, especially classical and neo-classical critics, have always been in the mood of Christophero Sly when he railed at the woman of the house and threatened her with presentation at the leet,

> "Because she brought stone jugs and no sealed quarts."

Without the "sealed quart" of the Unity—of the Rule generally—these critics will not slake, nor let others slake, their thirst. But the affirmation of the Unity of Interest, in La Motte's way,

[1] The main documents of which are Madame Dacier's *Traité des causes de la corruption du goût* (Paris, 1714) and La Motte's *Réflexions sur la Critique*, which will be found in the third volume of the ed. just mentioned.

[2] In his *Premier Discours sur la Tragédie*, *ed. cit. sup.*, iv. 23 *sq.*

does inevitably bring with it licence to use the stone jug or anything else, so only that the good wine of poetry be made to do its good office.

Rollin.

The Quarrel left its traces for a long time on criticism, and seems to have partly determined the composition, as late as 1730, of two books of some note, the *Traité des Études* of the excellent Rollin, and the elaborate *Théâtre des Grecs* of the Père Brumoy. Of neither need we say very much. The first-named[1] had considerable influence at home and abroad, especially in Germany; but Rollin's successor, Batteux, was justified in the good-humoured malice of his observation,[2] "Je trouve à l'article de la Poésie un discours fort sensé sur son origine et sa destination, qui doit être toute au profit de la vertu. On y cite les beaux endroits d'Homère; on y donne la plus juste idée de la sublime Poésie des Livres Saints; mais c'était une définition que je demandais." Alas! we have experienced the same disappointment many times; nor is it Batteux himself who will cure us of it.

Brumoy.

Brumoy's imposing quartos[3] have at least the advantage (how great a one the same experience has shown us) of tackling a definite subject in a business-like way. His book consists of actual translations of a certain number of Greek pieces, of analyses of all the rest that we have, and of divers discourses. He leads off with a forcible and well-founded complaint of the extreme ignorance of Greek tragedy and drama generally which the Quarrel had shown; his observations on individual writers and pieces are often very sensible; and his "Discourse on the Parallel between the Theatres" has a bearing which he probably did not suspect, and might not have relished. He dwells with vigour and knowledge on the *differences* between them in order to show that not merely preference, as in the Quarrel, but even strict comparison, is impossible between things so different. It could not be but that sooner or later it would dawn, on some readers at least, that it was even more ridiculous to try to make the two obey the same laws.

As has been already shown in the last book, literary criticism

[1] 4 vols., Paris, 1720-1731.

[2] *Op. cit. inf.*, I. xx.

[3] 3 vols., Paris, 1730.

had, even by the middle of the seventeenth century, established so firm a hold on French taste that the representative system becomes more and more imperative upon the historian thereof. To represent the later days of Fontenelle and those when Voltaire, though attaining, had not entirely attained his almost European dictatorship of letters, three names will serve very well; one perhaps new to many (if there be many) readers of these pages, another one of the conscript names of literary history, respected if not read, and the third a classic of the world—in plainer words, Rémond de Saint-Mard, the Abbé Du Bos, and Montesquieu.

Rémond de Saint-Mard.

Saint-Mard has been rather badly treated by the books,—for instance, Vapereau's *Dictionnaire des Littératures*, often no despicable compilation, not only dismisses him as *médiocre*, but misspells his name Saint-Marc. He had, however, some influence in his own day, especially on the Germans;[1] and there is an extremely pretty little edition[2] of his works, most of which had been issued separately earlier. To some extent he is a follower of Fontenelle, writes *Dialogues of Gods, &c.*, *Lettres Galantes et Philosophiques*, and the like, to please the town and the ladies, but with a constant turning to criticism. In the "Discourse," which precedes his *Dialogues* in the collected edition, there is a very odd and, as it seems to me, a very noteworthy passage, in which, though there may be some would-be fine-gentleman nonchalance, there is also a dawning of that sense of the unnaturalness and inconvenience of "the rules" which is constantly showing itself in the early eighteenth century. He admits[3] that he has not followed his own rules; for the orthodox dialogue ought to have one subject, led up to for some time, announced at last. But somehow or other most of his dialogues have more. So few ideas are fertile enough for

[1] I have found him repeatedly quoted in those interesting early gropings of the German nonage, which will be referred to in the next chapter. Had he anything to do with Lady Mary W. Montagu's tormentor, Rémond?

[2] 5 vols., Amsterdam, 1750. It is rather too pretty, and so rare. But it is in the British Museum: and I have a copy (which I owe to the kindness of Mr Gregory Smith) of the *Réflexions* (*v. inf.*) It has only initials ("R. D. S. M.") on the title-page.

[3] i. 65, ed. cit. The Dialogues themselves had appeared as early as 1711.

a whole Dialogue!—a sentence which obviously cuts away the theory of the rule, and not merely its practice.

Nor are his other works by any means destitute of original ideas worthily put. In one of his definition-descriptions of poetry,[1] if there is something of eighteenth-century sensualism, there is much also of the acute and practical psychology of the period. The words *do* account—whether in "low" or "high" fashion—for the poetic delight, as "Philosophy teaching by example" and other arid abstractions do not. His theory elsewhere, that Custom communicates the charm of versification (he does not quote *usus concinnat*, but inevitably suggests it), has probably a great deal of truth in it, if it is not the whole truth; and though we know that his explanation of the origin of Poetry—that it came because Prose was too common—is historically inaccurate, it is evidently only a false deduction, uncorrected by actual historic knowledge, from the real fact that the "discommoning of the common" *is* a main source of the poetic pleasure. In points such as these Rémond de Saint-Mard rises commendably above the estimable dulness of his contemporary Louis Racine,[2] with his admiration oddly distributed between Milton and his own papa, and in the former case more oddly conditioned by respect for Addison and Voltaire; his laborious rearrangement of most of the old commonplaces about poetry and poets; and his obliging explanation that "Ces images de magiciennes et de sorcières de Laponie ne paraissaient pas extravagantes aux Anglais dans le temps que Milton écrivit."

L. Racine.

By this time "Æsthetics" were breaking the shell everywhere; but in many cases, as we have seen, they did not consciously affect the critical principles of writers. Du Bos, a solid inquirer, and a man of considerable

Du Bos.

[1] The *Réflexions sur la poésie suivies de lettres*, &c., had originally appeared in 1733-34 at The Hague. The passage is this: *On y rapproche de nous les objets qui sont les plus éloignés—on leur donne du corps—on les anime. Toute la Nature est agitée des mêmes passions que nous.*

[2] 6 vols., Paris, 1808. For in this kind of work one must often read six volumes to justify the writing of six lines. And Racine, to do him justice, if not a great genius, is no small symptom. When a Frenchman of his time and associations reads Milton reverently, something will happen soon.

ability in that striking out of wide generalisations which delighted his time, could hardly have avoided them. His *Réflexions Critiques sur la Poésie et sur la Peinture*[1] have sometimes been credited with considerable precursorship on the literary side. It is certain that he lays some stress (Part II., § 14 *sq.*) on the effect of Climate upon Art, and if this "seem such dear delight, Beyond all other," he must have the credit due therefor from those to whom it so seems. To those who reflect on the climatic authorship, say of *Romeo and Juliet* and the sonnets of La Casa, doubts may occur. Du Bos is certainly an interesting and stimulating writer; but his very excursions into generality seem to have precluded him from studying any particular author carefully; and the crotchet and paradox which appear in his more famous and later *Histoire de la Monarchie Française* are not absent from the *Réflexions*. These take, moreover, a distinctly "classic" bent. Dr Johnson would have loved, and very possibly did love, him for arguing in a masterly manner that French poetry simply *cannot* equal Latin, either in style or in cadence and harmony of verse; nor perhaps would Mr Matthew Arnold on this occasion have disdained to say ditto to Dr Johnson. Latin words are more beautiful than French. Harmony is easier to attain in Latin than in French. The rules are less troublesome in Latin than in French, and their observance results in more beauties in the mother than in the daughter. This is "Thorough" with a vengeance.[2]

Stimulating but desultory character of his Réflexions.

On the great question of *katharsis* Du Bos holds the view that art operates by imitating the things which would have excited strong passions in us if real, but which, as not being real, only excite weak ones; and makes fair fight for it (Part I., § 3). He thinks that while execution is everything in painting it is not everything in poetry, but still much. He quotes English critics, especially Addison, pretty freely, and is not far from holding with them

[1] 2 vols., Paris, 1719. In English by T. Nugent: 3 vols., 1748.

[2] *Op. cit.*, Part I., § 35. His justest strictures are on the extravagantly syllabic quality of French prosody, and its neglect of quantity. His ear seems to have been good for rhythm, bad for rhyme.

that French drama deals too much with love. He has some really acute remarks on what he calls poetry of style, distinguishing this style from mere diction and versification, and connecting this directly with his Latin-French paradox. He even ventures close to the sin unpardonable, in the eyes of Classicism, by arguing that the beauty of the parts of a poem contributes more to its effect than the justness and regularity of the plan, and that a poem may be "regular" to the n^{th} and yet quite a bad poem. He has respect for the popular judgment —a respect suggesting a not impossible acquaintance with Gravina (*v. infra*, p. 538), who had written a good many years before him: and he distinctly postulates, after the manner of the century, an Æsthetic Sense existing in almost all, and capable of deciding on points of taste (Part II., § 22). He has some direct and more indirect observations in reference to the Quarrel, speaking with trenchant, but not too trenchant, disapproval (Part II., § 36) of those who endeavour to judge works of art by translations and criticisms. On the main question he is pretty sound. He is good on genius, and on what he calls the *artisan*, the craftsman *without* genius. Taking him altogether, Du Bos may be allowed the praise of a really fertile and original writer,[1] who says many things which are well worth attention and which seldom received it before him, in regard to what may be called the previous questions of criticism. His connection of poetry with painting sometimes helps him, and seldom leads him absolutely wrong; but it to some extent distracts him, and constantly gives an air of desultoriness and haphazard to his observation. It is, moreover, quite remarkable how persistently he abides *in generalibus*, scarcely ever descending below the mediate examination of Kinds. When he touches on individual works of art he confines himself in the most gingerly fashion to illustration merely; there is never an appreciation in whole or in considerable part.

When Voltaire denounced Montesquieu for *lèse-poésie*, the accused, if he had chosen, might have brought formidable

[1] Why did he think that *Hudibras* was written *par un homme de la maison Hovvart?* [*i.e.*, Howard] (i. 132). I may note here that Père Andrè, with his *Essai sur le Beau*, is postponed, as a pure Æsthetician, to the next volume.

counter accusations; but there was certainly some ground for the actual charge. When a man says[1] that "the four great poets are Plato, Malebranche, Shaftesbury, and Montaigne," he is evidently either a heretic or a paradoxer; and the hundred and thirty-seventh of the *Lettres Persanes* gives a sad colour to the worse supposition. There is perhaps less actual high treason to poetry here than in the remarks of Signor Pococurante, that noble Venetian, but there is more intended; the whole treatment is ostentatiously contemptuous. Dramatists are allowed some merit, but poets in general "put good sense in irons, and smother reason in ornament." As for epic poems, connoisseurs themselves say that there never have been but two good ones, and never will be a third.[2] Lyric poets are contemptible creatures who deal in nothing but harmonious extravagance and so forth. As for romances in prose, they have the faults of poems and others to boot. Elsewhere, in Letter xlviii., a "poet is the grotesque of the human race." It is scarcely surprising that, when we turn to the *Essai sur le Goût*, there is hardly any definite reference to literature at all, and that Montesquieu is entirely occupied in tracing or imagining abstract reasons for the attractiveness of abstract things like "surprise," "symmetry," "variety," and even of the *je ne sais quoi*. The *je ne sais quoi* in an attractive, but not technically beautiful, girl is, it seems, due to surprise at finding her so attractive, which, with all respect to the President, seems to be somewhat "circular." In fact, Montesquieu is chiefly interesting to us, first, because he made no literary use of his own theories as to climate and the rest—which later writers have used and abused in this way; and secondly, because he shows, *in excelsis*, that radically unliterary as well as unpoetical vein which, for all its remarkable literary performance, is characteristic of his time.

Montesquieu.

It will surprise no one who has any acquaintance with the

[1] *Pensées Diverses* (*Œuvres*, ed. Laboulaye, Paris, 1875, 7 vols., or with Vian's *Life* 8), vii. 171.

[2] It has been thought that this passage, as glancing at the *Henriade*, was one of the reasons of Voltaire's affection for Montesquieu. It is perhaps worth observing that there is a strong resemblance, with some minor differences, between Montesquieu's attitude to literature, and that of his friend Chesterfield.

subject that but a few lines should have been given to Montesquieu; it may shock some to find but a very few pages given to Voltaire.[1] But while I have never been able to rank the Patriarch's criticism high, a reperusal of it in sequence, for the purpose of this book, has even reduced the level of my estimate. The fact is that, consummate literary craftsman as he was, and wanting only the *je ne sais quoi* itself (or rather something that we know too well) to rank with the very greatest men of letters, Voltaire was not a man with whom literary interest by any means predominated. It is not merely that his anti-crusade against *l'infâme* constantly colours his literary, as it does all his other, judgments; and that once at least it made him certainly indorse, and possibly enounce, the astounding statement that the Parables in the Gospels are "coarse and low."[2] But when this perpetually disturbing influence is at its least active point, we can see perfectly that neither Voltaire's treasure nor his heart is anywhere, with the doubtful exception of the drama division, in literature. In mathematics and in physical science there is no doubt that he was genuinely interested; and he was perhaps still more interested (as indeed men of his century generally were) in what may be vaguely called anthropology, the moral, social, and (to some, though only to some, extent) political history of mankind. But for literature he had very little genuine love; though the vanity in which he certainly was not lacking could not fail to be conscious of his own excellence as a practitioner in it; and though he could not but recognise its power — its almost omnipotence—as a weapon. It was probably the more human character of the drama that attracted him there.

Voltaire: Disappointments of his criticism.

However this may be, it is impossible, for me at least, to rank him high as a critic: and this refusal is hardly in the least due to his famous blasphemies against Shakespeare and Milton. As we have seen—as we shall see—it is

Examples of it.

[1] I use the thirteen-vol. ed. of the *Panthéon Littéraire* (Paris, 1876) because, though cumbrous individually, it is the only one that will go in moderate shelf-room.

[2] This comes, it is true, from the *Sentiments du Curé Meslier* (vi. 542). But it is allowed that Voltaire rewrote this, and I should not be surprised if he did a little more.

possible to disagree profoundly with some, nay, with many, of a critic's estimates, and yet to think highly of his critical gifts. But Voltaire scarcely anywhere shows the true *ethos* of the critic: and that "smattering erudition" of his is nowhere so much of a smattering, and so little of an erudition, as here. His two famous surveys of English and French literature, in the *Lettres sur les Anglais* and the *Siècle de Louis Quatorze*, show, on the French side at least, a more complete ignorance of literary history than Boileau's own: and the individual judgments, though admirably expressed, are banal and without freshness of grasp. The extensive *Commentary on Corneille* contains, of course, interesting things, but is of no high critical value. The *Essai sur la Poésie Epique* opens with some excellent ridicule of "the rules"—a subject which indeed might seem to invite the Voltairian method irresistibly; but after this and some serious good sense of the same kind, he practically deserts to the rules themselves. He admits *fautes grossières* in Homer, finds "monstrosity and absurdity up to the limits of imagination" in Shakespeare, thinks that Virgil is "Homer's best work," discovers in the supernatural of Tasso and Camoens only "insipid stories fit to amuse children," dismisses, as everybody knows, the great Miltonic episode of Satan, Death, and Sin as "disgusting and abominable," and keeps up throughout his survey that wearisome castanet-clatter of "fault and beauty—beauty and fault" which, whensoever and wheresoever we find it, simply means that the critic is not able to see his subject as a whole, and tell us whether it is foul or fair.

Perhaps no better instance of the feebleness of Voltaire's criticism can be found than in his dealings with Rabelais.[1] Here there are practically no disturbing elements. Yet no one is more responsible than Voltaire is for the common notion, equally facile and false, of Rabelais as a freethinker with a sharp eye to the main chance, who disguised his freethinking in a cloak of popular obscenity, who is often amusing, sometimes admirable, but as a whole coarse, tedious, and illegible, or at best

[1] These are to be found in more places than one: the *Lettres sur les Anglais* (originally *Lettres Philosophiques*), those to the Prince of Brunswick, the dialogue in which Rabelais figures with Lucian and Erasmus, &c.

appealing to the most vulgar taste. Take the famous sentence that Swift is a "Rabelais de bonne compagnie,"[1] work it out either side, and it will be difficult to find anywhere words more radically uncritical. Or turn to the *Dictionnaire Philosophique.* Not only are the literary articles very few, and in some of these few cases mere *rechauffés* of the *Lettres sur Les Anglais,* &c., but the head "Literature" itself contains the singular statement that criticism is *not* literature—because nobody speaks of "une belle critique." The articles "Esprit" and "Goût" are attractive—especially the latter, because it is on the critical watchword of the century: but we are sent away, worse than empty, with some abuse of Shakespeare, and with the statement, "No man of letters can possibly fail to recognise the *perfected* taste of Boileau in the *Art Poétique.*" Only, perhaps, the article on *Art Dramatique* is worthy of its title, and the reason of this has been indicated.

The numerous *Mélanges Littéraires* are again interesting reading—indeed, when is Voltaire *not* interesting, save when he is scientific, or when he shows that "the zeal of the *devil's* house" can inspire a man of genius with forty-curate-power dulness? They include almost every kind of writing, from actual reviews (*Lettres aux Auteurs de La Gazette Littéraire*) on books French and foreign, upwards or downwards. But all those that are probably genuine exhibit just the same characteristics as the more elaborate works. The reviews of Sterne and of Churchill will show how really superficial Voltaire's literary grip was; though both of them (as being Voltaire's they could not well help doing) contain acute remarks. The too famous argument-abstract of *Hamlet*[2] is perhaps the most remarkable example of irony exploding through the touch-hole that literature affords. The "Parallel of Horace, Boileau, and Pope" from such a hand might seem as if it could not be without value: but it has very little. And perhaps nowhere does Voltaire appear to much less critical advantage than in the *Lettre de M. de La Visclède* on La Fontaine, where, as in the case of Rabelais, it might be thought that no prejudice could possibly affect him. The superfine con-

[1] This, the usually quoted form, runs in the *Lettres sur les A.*, "un Rabelais dans son bon sens, et vivant en bonne compagnie."

[2] Ed. cit., ix. 56.

demnation of the *bonhomme's* style, as filled with expressions *plus faites pour le peuple que pour les honnêtes gens* (not, let it be observed, in the *Fables*, but in the *Contes*), could hardly tell a more disastrous tale. Philistia by its Goliath in Paris echoes Philistia by its common folk in London, at this special time. La Fontaine and Goldsmith are "low."

Causes of his failure.

The fact would appear to be that, independently of that lack of purely literary interest which has been noted above, other causes kept Voltaire back from really original and valuable criticism. The sense of the necessity of clinging to and conserving *something*, which has often been shown by iconoclasts, seems to have directed itself in him towards literary orthodoxy: while, on the other hand, as we have already seen, his natural acuteness refused to blink entirely some of the absurdities of the "Rule" system. His craftsmanship made it possible for him to succeed in certain kinds of artificial poetry—the regular tragedy, the formal heroic poem, the light piece, epigram, or epistle, or what not—which were specially favoured by Classical criticism. He was not well equipped by nature for success in any Romantic kind—not to mention that Romance was almost indissolubly connected with those Ages of Faith which he scorned. Moreover, though no man has committed more faults of taste, in the wider and nobler sense, than did Voltaire, yet within a narrower and more arbitrary circle of "taste" of the conventional kind, no one could walk with more unerring precision. Yet again, the Great Assumption by which the neo-classics made a changeling of their Taste with Good Sense, and mothered it on Nature, appealed strongly to such philosophical theories as he had. Accordingly, both in public and private,[1] the great heretic, with very few exceptions, plays the part of a very Doctor of the Literary Sorbonne, and leaves the attempt at a new criticism to the more audacious innovation, and the more thorough-going naturalism, of Diderot.[2]

[1] I have not thought it necessary to waste time and space by selecting additional justificatory pieces from his enormous *Correspondence*.

[2] This attitude was emphasised (perhaps by his dislike of Rousseau) in his later years; and was handed on to men like Condorcet and La Harpe.

Of the other *Di majores* of the *philosophe* school, Rousseau would always have been prevented by his temperament from expressing critically the appreciations which the same temperament might have suggested: and, if he had been a critic at all, he would have been on the revolting and Romantic side. Diderot actually was so. The critical utterances of D'Alembert,[1] chiefly if not wholly given in his *Éloges*, express the clear understanding and by no means trivial good sense of their writer. But, like Voltaire's, D'Alembert's heart was elsewhere. Buffon remains; and by a curious accident he, though *totus in* the things of mere science, has left us one of the most noteworthy phrases of literary criticism in the history of literature. Moreover, this phrase is contained in a discourse[2] which is all literary and almost all critical, which is very admirable within its own range and on its own side, and which practically provides us with one of the first, and to this day one of the best, discussions of Style as such. That we have in these latter days "heard too much of Style" is often said, and may be true: "where" we have *seen* too much of it "you shall tell me" as Seithenin said to the Prince. But we, in the restricted sense of students of criticism, have not "seen too much" of discussions of style hitherto. On the contrary, we have seen that the ancients were constantly shy of it in its quiddity; that even Longinus seems to prefer to abstract and embody one of its qualities and discuss that; and that after the revival of criticism the old avoidances, or the old apologies for the *phortikon ti*, were too often renewed. Buffon has none of this prudery: though he lays the greatest possible stress on the necessity of there being something behind style, of style being "the burin that graves the thought."

Others: Buffon.

[1] The gibe of Gautier (*Caprices et Zigzags*, "Un tour en Belgique"), where he calls the Sun "un astre à qui M. de Malfilâtre a fait une ode trouvée admirable par D'Alembert" contains no doubt something of youthful Romantic naughtiness in it: but also something more. The ode *has* a frigid Akensidish grace; but there is too much about axes and orbits therein: and it is to be feared that this, rather than the poetry, attracted the *philosophe* critic.

[2] His Academic *Discours de Réception* (Aug. 25, 1753). It is easily accessible—for instance in the Didot *Œuvres Choisies*, i. 19-25.

Perhaps he does not quite keep at the height of his famous and often misquoted[1] dictum—"Le style est l'homme même" ("*Style and the man.*") —in itself the best thing ever said on the subject, and, as is the case with most good things, made better by the context. He has been showing why only well-written books go down to posterity. Information can be transferred; fact becomes public property; novelty ceases to be novel. *Ces choses sont hors de l'homme; le style est* [*de*?] *l'homme même.* In other words, the style—the form—is that which the author adds to the matter; it is that inseparable, but separably intelligible, element which cannot be transferred, taken away, or lost. It is clear that Buffon would not have lent himself to that discountenancing of the distinction of Matter and Form which some have attempted. Perhaps his other remarks are less uniformly, though they are often, admirable. He should not, as a man of natural science, have congratulated the Academicians on contemning "le vain son des mots," which, he should have known, always has something, and may have much, to do with style; and it is certainly inadequate to say that style is "the *order and movement* given to our thoughts." There is much that is true, but also something of mere neo-classic orthodoxy, in his painful repetitions of the necessity of unity and greatness of subject; and to say that "l'esprit humain ne peut rien créer" is sheer *lèse-littérature.* Rather is it true that, except God, the human mind is the only thing that can create, and that it shows its divine origin thereby. But Buffon was only a man of science, and we must excuse him. The special curse of the time[2] is curiously visible in his enumeration, among the causes of nobility in style, of "L'attention à ne nommer les choses que par *les termes les plus généraux.*" The "streak of the tulip" barred again! But he is certainly right when he says that "jamais l'imitation n'a rien créé": though here it may be retorted, "Yes; but

[1] It is generally quoted "Le style c'est l'homme." There is a further dispute whether it ought to be "*de* l'homme même." For what is probably the nearest anticipation of it, *v. sup.*, p. 336.

[2] So again in the remark, not made formally, but often thrown in his face, that certain verses were "as fine as fine *prose.*" But this heresy, as readers of this volume will know, is only that of Fénelon and La Motte revived.

imitation teaches how to discard itself, and to begin to create," while, as he has just extended the disability to the human faculties generally, his point seems a blunt one. Still, his directions for *ordonnance* as a preliminary to style, his cautions against *pointes, traits saillants,* pomposity [he might have recked this rede a little more himself], and other things, are excellent. The piece is extraordinary in its combination of originality, brilliancy, and sense, and in it Science has certainly lent Literature one of the best critical essays of the eighteenth century.

Not an unimportant document of the time for the history of criticism is the critical attitude of that remarkable Marcellus of philosophism, Vauvenargues.[1] The few *Réflexions Critiques* which he has left are very curious. Vauvenargues was a man of an absolute independence of spirit so far as he knew; but conditioned by the limits of his knowledge. He had neither time nor opportunity for much reading; he probably knew little of any literature but his own. It must be remembered also that his main bent was ethical, not literary. Such a man should give us the form and pressure of the time in an unusual and interesting way.

Vauvenargues does so. We find him, after a glowing and almost adequate eulogy of La Fontaine, gibbeting him for showing *plus de style que d'invention, et plus de négligence que d'exactitude* — not the happiest pair of antitheses. The subjects of his *Tales* are "low"—unfortunate word which "speaks" almost every one who uses it—and they are not interesting, which is more surprising. Boileau, on the contrary, is extolled to the skies. He has really too much genius (like the 'Badian who was really too brave), and this excess, with a smaller excess of fire, truth, solidity, *agrément,* may have perhaps injured his range, depth, height, finesse, and grace. Molière again is *trop bas* (at least his subjects are), while La Bruyère escapes this defect—you might as well set

Vauvenargues.

[1] His literary work has only one small section to itself, the *Réflexions Critiques sur quelques Poètes;* but some of it appears in the *Fragments,* the *Dialogues,* and elsewhere. All is in Gilbert's excellent edition of the *Œuvres,* (2 vols., Paris, 1857), some in that volume of the Didot Collection which gives Vauvenargues' *Maxims* with those of La Rochefoucauld and Montesquieu.

together Addison and Shakespeare, and no doubt Vauvenargues would have done so. How different is Racine, who is always "great"—"gallantly great," let us add, like Mr Pepys in his new suit. Voltaire, who had certainly prompted some of these sins, made a little atonement by inducing Vauvenargues to admire Corneille to some extent. But Corneille, he says, from his date, *could* not have *le goût juste*, and the parallel with Racine is one of the most interesting of its numerous kind. J. B. Rousseau might have been nearly as good a poet as Boileau, if Boileau had not taught him all he knew in poetry, but his *vieux langage* is most regrettable. Such were the opinions of a young man of unusual ability, but with little taste in literature except that which he found prevalent in the middle of the eighteenth century.

Batteux.

This middle, and the later part of it, saw in the Abbé Batteux the last of that really remarkable, though not wholly estimable, line of *législateurs du Parnasse* which had begun with Boileau, and whose edicts had been accepted, for the best part of a century, with almost universal deference. Still later, and surviving into the confines of the nineteenth century, La Harpe gives us almost the last distinguished defender, and certainly a defender as uncompromising as he was able, of neo-classic orthodoxy. Some attention must be given to each of these, and to Marmontel between them, but we need not say very much of others—except in the representative way.

Batteux began as an extoller of the *Henriade*, after many years spent in schoolmastering and the occasional publication of Latin verses, but before the century had reached the middle of its road. He essayed, a little later, divers treatises[1] on Poetic and Rhetoric, all of which were adjusted and collected in his *Principes de la Littérature*,[2] while he also executed various minor works, the most useful of which was *Les Quatre Poétiques*,[3] a translation, with critical notes, of Aristotle, Horace, and Vida,

[1] *Les Beaux Arts reduits à un même principe*, Paris, 1746; *Cours de Belles-Lettres*, 4 vols., Paris, 1750; *Traité de la Construction Oratoire*, Paris, 1764.

[2] 5 vols., Paris, 1764. This is the edition I have used; later ones seem to be in 6 vols., but without addition so far as I know.

[3] 2 vols., Paris, 1771.

with Boileau added. In so far as I am able to judge, Batteux is about the best of the seventeenth-eighteenth century "Preceptists."[1] The Introduction to his introductory tractate, *Les Beaux Arts réduits à un même Principe*, indulges in some mild but by no means unbecoming irony on his predecessors,[2] and expresses the candid opinion that few of them had really consulted Aristotle at all. He admits the multiplicity and the galling character of "rules"; but he thinks that these can be reduced to a tolerable and innoxious, nay, in the highest degree useful, minimum, by keeping the eye fixed on the Imitation of Nature, and of the best nature. But how is this to guide us? Here Batteux shows real ingenuity by seizing on the other great fetich of the eighteenth-century creed—Taste—as a regulator to be in its turn regulated.

His adjustment of Rules and Taste.

Indeed a careful perusal of Batteux cannot but force on us the consideration that the mechanical age, the age of Arkwright and Watt, was approaching, or had approached. His Rules and his Taste "clutch" each other by turns, like the elaborate plant of the modern machinist. If the Rules are too narrow and precise, Taste holds them open; if Taste shows any sign of getting lawless, the Rules bring it to its bearings. It is extremely ingenious; but the questions remain—Whether it is natural? and Whether any good came from the exercise of the principles which it attempts to reconcile and defend? The manner of Batteux, it must be allowed, is as much less freezing and unsatisfactory than Le Bossu's, as it is less arbitrary and less aggressive than Boileau's. These two would, in the face of fact and history, have *identified* Taste and a certain construction of Rule. Batteux rather regards the two as reciprocal escapements, easing and regulating each other. It is part of his merit that he recognises, to some extent, the importance of observation. In fact, great part of this introductory treatise is a naïf and interesting complaint of the difficulty which the results of this observation are introducing into Rule-criticism. "Rules are getting so many," he admits in his opening sentence; and, no doubt, so

[1] It is perhaps right to warn the reader that this is not, I believe, the general opinion.

[2] See on Rollin, *sup.*, p. 509.

long as you find it necessary to make a new rule whenever you find a new poet, the state of things must be more and more parlous. But, like all his century-fellows without exception on the Classical, and like too many on the other side, he does not think of simply marching through the open door, and leaving the prison of Rule and Kind behind him.

From these idols Batteux will not yet be separated: he hardens his heart in a different manner from Pharaoh, and will not let himself go. The *utile* is never to be parted from the *dulce*; "the poems of Homer and Virgil are not vain Romances, where the mind wanders at the will of a mad imagination; they are great bodies of doctrine," &c. Anacreon [Heaven help us!] was himself determined to be a moral teacher.[1] Again, there must be Action, and it must be single, united, simple, yet of variety; the style must not be too low, or too high, &c., &c.

When Batteux has got into the old rut, he remains in it. We slip into the well-known treatises by Kinds—Dialogue, Eclogue, Heroic Poem, and the rest — with the equally well-known examination afterwards of celebrated examples in a shamefaced kind of way—to the extent of two whole volumes for poetry, and a third (actually the fourth) for prose. Finally, we have what is really a separate tractate, *De la Construction Oratoire*. The details in these later volumes are often excellent; but obviously, and *per se*, they fall into quite a lower rank as compared with the first. If we were to look at nothing but the fact, frankly acknowledged by Batteux, that he is now considering French classical literature only, we should be able to detect the error. In his first volume he had at least referred to Milton.

His incompleteness.

In other words Batteux, like the rest of them, is not so much a halter between two opinions as a man who has deliberately made up his mind to abide by one, but who will let in as much of the other as he thinks it safe to do, or cannot help doing. Let him once extend his principle of observation in time, country, and kind, and, being a reasonably ingenious and ingenuous person, he must discover, first, that his

[1] *Op. cit.*, i. 60.

elaborate double-check system of Rule and Taste will not work, and, secondly, that there is not the least need of it. You must charge epicycle on cycle before you can get, even with the freest play of Taste, the *Iliad* and the *Æneid* and the *Orlando* to work together under any Rule. Epicycle must be added to epicycle before you can get in the *Chanson de Roland* and the *Morte d'Arthur* as well. Drop your "rule," ask simply, "Are the things put before me said *poeticamente?*" "Do they give me the poetic pleasure?" and there is no further difficulty. Batteux, though, as we have seen, by no means a bigot, would probably have stopped his ears and rent his clothes if such a suggestion had been made to him.

Marmontel.

Batteux is a remarkable, and probably the latest, example of neo-classicism sitting at ease in Zion and promulgating laws for submissive nations; in La Harpe, with an even stronger dogmatism, we shall find, if not the full consciousness that the enemy is at the gates of the capital, at any rate distinct evidence of knowledge that there is sedition in the provinces.[1] Between the two, Marmontel[2] is a distinguished, and a not disagreeable, example of that middle state which we find everywhere in the late eighteenth century, but which in France is distinguished at once by greater professed orthodoxy, and by concessions and compromises of a specially tell-tale kind. The critical work of the author of *Bélisaire* and *Les Incas* is very considerable in bulk. He has written an Essay on Romance in connection with the two very "anodyne" examples of the kind just referred to; an Essay (indeed two essays) on Taste; many book reviews for the *Observateur Littéraire*, &c.; prefaces and comments for some specimens of French early seventeenth-century drama—Mairet's *Sophonisbe*,

[1] He, with Condorcet and M. J. Chénier, is sometimes spoken of as showing a classical *reaction* against the eighteenth-century toleration of English and other vagaries which we shall see in Marmontel. I think "reaction" is rather too strong a word, though "recrudescence" might do. Condorcet was only a critic *par interim*, if even that, nor need we occupy ourselves with him: justice shall be done (Fortune permitting) in the next volume to the person who had the honour to be brother to André Chénier.

[2] *Œuvres Complètes*, 7 vols., Paris, 1819; *Eléments de Littérature* by themselves, 3 vols. in the Didot Collection.

Du Ryer's *Scévole*, &c.; and, besides other things, a mass of articles on literary and critical subjects for the *Encyclopédie*, which are generally known in their collected form as *Eléments de Littérature*. He has been rather variously judged as a critic. There is no doubt that he is a special sinner in that perpetual gabble about *la vertu, la morale*, and the rest, which is so sickening in the whole group; and which more than justified Mr Carlyle's vigorous apostrophe, "*Be* virtuous, in the Devil's name and his grandmother's, and have done with it!" He has also that apparent inconsistency, something of which (as we have seen once for all in Dryden's case) often shows itself in men of alert literary interests who do not very early work out for themselves a personal literary creed, and who are averse to swallowing a ready-made one. But at the same time he never openly quarrels with neo-classicism, and is sometimes one of its most egregious spokesmen; while he is "philosophastrous," in the special eighteenth-century kind, to a point which closely approaches caricature. I have quoted elsewhere, but must necessarily quote again here, his three egregious and pyramidal reasons[1] for the puzzling excellence of English poetry. Either, it seems, the Englishman, being a glory-loving animal, sees that poetry adds to the lustre of nations, and so he goes and does it; *or* being naturally given to meditation and sadness, he needs to be moved and distracted by the illusions of this beautiful art; *or* [Shade of Molière!] it is because his genius in certain respects is proper for Poesy.

Oddities and qualities of his criticism.

To comment on this would only spoil it; but let it be observed that Marmontel *does* admit the excellence of English poetry. So also, though he never swerves, in consciousness or conscience, from neo-classic orthodoxy, he insinuates certain doubts about Boileau, and quotes,[2] at full length, two pieces of the despised Ronsard as showing lyrical qualities in which the legislator of Parnassus is wanting. His article *Poétique* is, considering his standpoint, a quite extraordinarily just summary and criticism of the most celebrated authorities on the subject—Aristotle, Horace, Vida, Scaliger, Castelvetro, Vauquelin, Boileau, Le Bossu, Gravina, &c.

[1] *El. de Litt.*, article *Poésie*. [2] Ibid., art. *Anacréontique*.

—and the attitude to Boileau,[1] visible, as has been said, elsewhere, is extremely noteworthy. Marmontel speaks of Despréaux with compliments: but some, even of his praises, are not a little equivocal, and he contrives to put his subject's faults with perfect politeness indeed, but without a vestige of compromise. Boileau, he says, gives a precise and luminous notion of all the kinds, but he is not deep on a single one: his *Art* may contribute to form the taste if it be well understood, but to understand it well one must have the taste already formed.

It would be possible, of course,—indeed, very easy,—to select from Marmontel's abundant critical writings, which covered great part of a long lifetime in their composition, a bundle of "classical" absurdities which would leave nothing to desire. But the critic is almost always better than his form of creed. He takes an obviously genuine, if of necessity not at first a thoroughly well instructed, interest in the *Histoire du Théâtre* of the Frères Parfait, the first systematic[2] dealing with old French literature since Fauchet and Pasquier: his *Essai sur les Romans*, though of course considered *du côté moral*, is, for his date, a noteworthy attempt in that comparative and historical study of literature which was to lead to the new birth of criticism. It is most remarkable to find him, in the early reviews of his *Observateur*,[3] dating from the midst of the fifth decade of the eighteenth century, observing, as to *Hamlet* in La Place's translation, that the ghost-scene and the duel with Laertes inspire terror and pathetic interest at the very reading, asking why "our poets" should deny themselves the use of these great springs of the two tragic passions, admiring the taste and justice of the observations to the players, and actually finding *Titus Andronicus*, though "frightful and sanguinary," a thing worth serious study. That it is possible to extract from these very places, as from others, the usual stuff about Shakespeare's "want of order and decency," &c., is of no moment. *This* is

[1] The enemy will perhaps say, parodying Hegel: "With this historian of criticism, anybody is a critic who does not believe in Boileau." 'A will have a little galled me: but not seriously.

[2] I use this word not as synonymous with "methodical," but as contrasting the book with fragmentary commentaries like those of La Monnoye and Le Duchat.

[3] These will be found in vol. vii. of ed. cit.

matter of course: it is not matter of course that, in the dead waist and middle of the eighteenth century, a French critic should write of the description of Cleopatra on the Cydnus: "Ce morceau présente Shakespeare sous un nouveau point de vue. On n'a connu jusqu'à présent que la force du génie de cet auteur: on ne s'attendait pas à tant de délicatesse et de légèreté."[1]

I should like to dwell longer on Marmontel if it were only for two or three phrases which appear in one short article,[2] "Depuis que Pascal et Corneille, Racine et Boileau ont *épuré et appauvri* la langue de Marot et de Montaigne. . . . Boileau n'avait pas reçu de la nature l'organe avec lequel on sent les beautés simples et touchantes de notre divin fabuliste [La Fontaine of course]. . . . Il est à souhaiter qu'on n'abandonne pas ce langage du bon vieux temps . . . on ferait un joli dictionnaire des mots qu'on a tort d'abandonner et de laisser vieillir." It must be clear to any one who reads these phrases that there is the germ of *mil-huit-cent-trente* in them—the first and hardly certain sound of the knell of narrow, colourless vocabulary and literature in France. But enough has probably been said. It would be difficult to make out a case for Marmontel as in any way a great critic. He has not cleared his mind of cant enough for that. But he is an instance, and an important instance, of the way in which the clearing agents were being gradually thrown into the minds of men of letters at this time, and of the reaction which they were—at first partially and accidentally—producing. Even his *Essai sur le Goût*, fantastically arbitrary as it is, wears at times almost an air of irony, as if the writer were really exposing the arbitrariness and the convention of the thing he is ostensibly praising. He is comparing and tasting, not simply deducing: and however much he may still be inclined to think with his master that the Satan, Sin, and Death piece is an unimaginable horror, and the citizen scenes

[1] M. Texte must have forgotten these remarkable passages, or perhaps not have known them, when in M. Petit de Julleville's large *History* (vi. 754) he wrote that La Place's version could only confirm readers in the idea that Shakespeare was a chaos of monstrosity and triviality. Evidently it had quite a different effect on Marmontel.

[2] Under the head *Marotique*.

in Shakespeare's Roman plays a vulgar excrescence, he is far from the obstinate sublimity-in-absurdity of La Harpe. He at least does not hold that a beauty, not according to rule, has no business to be a beauty; that the tree is not to be judged by the fruit, but the fruit by the ticket on the tree.

Others.

In the *mare magnum* of critical writing at this period, constantly fed by books, literary periodicals, academic competitions, and what not, it would be idle to attempt to chronicle drops — individuals who are not in some special way interesting or representative. It would be especially idle because—for reasons indicated more than once in passing already—the bulk of the criticism of this time in France is really of little value, being as doctrine make-believe, and destitute of thoroughness, and as appreciation injured by narrowness of reading and want of true literary interest. It cannot have been quite accidental, although the great collaborative *Histoire de la Littérature Française* of the late M. Petit de Julleville is not a model of methodic adequacy, that there is no strictly critical chapter in the volume on the eighteenth century. Take, for instance, two such representative men as Suard and Thomas, both of them born near the beginning of the second generation of the century, and therefore characteristic of its very central class and *crû*. Both enjoyed almost the highest reputation in the second rank. Marmontel somewhere speaks of Thomas's *Essai sur les Éloges* as the best piece of critical inquiry which had appeared since Cicero on the Orator; but it is fair to remember that Thomas had refused to stand against Marmontel for the Academy. Suard, for many years Secretary of the Academy itself, seriously endeavoured, and was by his contemporaries thought not to have endeavoured in vain, to make that office a sort of Criticship Laureate or King's Remembrancership of Literature. He has left volumes on volumes of critical work; and even now prefaces, introductions, &c., from his pen may be found in the older class of standard editions of French classics. Yet the work of neither of these would justify us in doing more than refer to them in this fashion. It is excellently written in the current style, in-

Thomas, Suard, &c.

clining to declamation and solemnity in Thomas,[1] to *persiflage* and smartness in Suard. It says what an academic critic of the time was supposed to say, and knows what he was supposed to know. But it really is, in Miss Mills' excellent figure, "the desert of Sahara," and a desert without many, if any, oases.

La Harpe.

La Harpe is a different person. He is not very kind to Batteux. He patronises his principles, and allows his scholarship to be sound; but finds fault with his style, calls his criticism *commune*—"lacking in distinction" is perhaps the best equivalent—his ideas narrow, and his prejudices pedantic. It would not be quite just to say *De te fabula*, but this is almost as much as we could say if we were judging La Harpe, after his own fashion of judgment, from a different standpoint. But the historian cannot judge thus. La Harpe is really an important person in the History of Criticism. He "makes an end," as Mr Carlyle used to say; in other words, whether he is or is not the last eminent neo-classical critic of France, he puts this particular phase of criticism as sharply and as effectively as it can be put. Nay, he does even more than this for us; he shows us neo-classicism at bay. Already, by the time of his later lectures, when by the oddest coincidence he was defending Voltaire and abusing Diderot, making head at once against the Jacobins and against that party of revived mediævalism which was the surest antidote to Jacobinism, there were persons—Népomucène Lemercier, and others—who held that Boileau and Racine had killed French poetry. Against these La Harpe takes up his testimony; and the necessity of opposition makes it all the more decided.

His Cours de Littérature.

His *Cours de Littérature* is a formidable—I had almost called it an impossible—book to tackle, composed of, or redacted from, the lectures of many years, and unfortunately, though not unnaturally, dwelling most fully on the parts of the subject that are of least real importance. Its first edition[2] was a shelf-full in itself. It now fills, with some

[1] *L'emphatique Thomas*, as he is duly called in that traditional distribution of epithets which is so dear to the French mind, and which helps to explain why it is always, in its depths, neo-classic.

[2] 18 vols. (Paris, 1825 *sq.*)

fragments, nearly the whole of three great volumes of the *Panthéon Littéraire,* and nearly two-thirds, certainly three-fifths, of this are devoted to the French literature of the eighteenth century, a subject for which, to speak frankly, it may be doubted whether any posterity will have time corresponding to spare. Even in the earlier and more general parts there are defects, quite unconnected with the soundness or unsoundness of La Harpe's general critical position. There is nothing which one should be slower to impute, save on the very clearest evidence, than ignorance of a subject of which a writer professes knowledge; and one should be slow, not merely on general principles of good manners, but because there is nothing which the baser kind of critic is so ready to impute. But I own that, after careful reading and reluctantly, I have come to the conclusion that La Harpe's knowledge of the classics left a very great deal to desire. That, in his survey of Epic, he omits Apollonius Rhodius in his proper place altogether and puts him in a postscript, might be a mere oversight, negligible by all but the illiberal: unfortunately the postscript itself shows no signs of critical appreciation. It is more unfortunate still that he should say that all the writers of ancient Rome loaded Catullus with eulogy, when we know that Horace only spares him a passing sneer, that Quintilian has no notice for anything but his "bitterness," and that hardly anybody but Martial does him real justice. However, we need not dwell on this. If La Harpe was not very widely or deeply read in old-world or in old-French literature, he certainly knew the French literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries very well indeed.

His critical position as ultimus suorum.

On the other hand, it is significant, and awkward, that, in dealing with English, German, and other modern literatures, he always seems to refer to translations, and hardly ever ventures a criticism except on the mere matter of the poem. Moreover, which is of even more importance for us, he was not in the slightest doubt about his point of view either of these or of any other literature. His censures and his praises are adjusted with almost unerring accuracy to the neo-classic creed, as we have defined and illustrated it in this volume. His *Introduction* pours all the scorn

he could muster on those who contemn the art of writing. Even Shakespeare, coarse as he is, was not without learning. That poet, Dante, and Milton executed "monstrous" works; but in these monsters there were some beautiful parts done according to "the principles." And, to do him justice, he never swerves or flinches from this. English has "an inconceivable pronunciation." [1] The *Odyssey* is an *Arabian Nights'* tale, puerile, languid, seriously extravagant, even ignoble in parts. The sojourns with Calypso and Circe offer nothing interesting to La Harpe. The wonderful descent to Hades is as bad as that of Æneas is admirable. La Harpe tells us that these and other similar judgments are proofs of his severe frankness. They certainly are; he has told us what he is.

That after this he should pronounce the *Georgics* "the most perfect poem transmitted to us by the Ancients"; fix on the *Prometheus* his favourite epithet of "monstrous," and say that it "cannot even be called a tragedy"; think Plutarch thoroughly justified in his censure of Aristophanes; read Thucydides with less pleasure than Xenophon; and decide that Apuleius wrote *vers le moyen age*, which was *un désert*,—these things do not surprise us, nor that he should tolerate *Ossian* after not tolerating Milton. It is in his fragment on the last-named poet that he gives us his whole secret, with one of those intentional, yet really unconscious, bursts of frankness which have been already noticed. "La poésie," he says, "ne doit me peindre que ce que je peux comprendre, admettre, ou supposer." That "suspension of disbelief" in which, at no distant date, Coleridge was to discover the real poetic effect would, it is clear, have been vehemently resisted and refused by La Harpe, or rather it could never have entered his head as possible.

He remains therefore hopelessly self-shut out of the gates of Poetry—only admitting and comprehending those beauties

[1] La Harpe here anticipated the Malay chief whom Mr Wallace met in the farthest isles of the Bird of Paradise, and who chased him therefrom with contumely when he said he came from a place called "England." "Unglung," said the chief, was not a word that a man could pronounce. And therefore—this is La Harpe all over—there could be no such place, and Mr Wallace was a liar.

which stray into the precinct of Rhetoric; discerning with horror "monsters" within the gates themselves; and in his milder moments conjecturing charitably that, if Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton had only always observed the rules, which they sometimes slipped into, they might have been nearly as good poets—he will not say quite—as Racine and Voltaire. Never have we met, nor shall we ever meet again, a critical Ephraim so utterly joined to idols. It is unnecessary—it would even be useless—to argue about him; he must be observed, registered, and passed. Yet I do not pretend to regret the time which I have myself spent over him. He writes well; he sees clearly through his "monstrous" spectacles and subject to their laws; above all, he has, what is, for some readers at any rate, the intense and unfailing charm of "Thorough." He is no cowardly Braggadochio or inconstant Paridell: he is Sansfoy and Sansloy in one — defending his Duessa, and perfectly ready to draw sword and spend blood for her at any moment. Nor does he wield the said sword by any means uncraftsmanly. Give him his premisses and his postulates, his Rules, his false Reason and sham Nature, his criterion of the admissible and comprehensible, and he very seldom makes a false conclusion. Would that all Gloriana's own knights were as uncompromising, as hardy, and as deft!

The Academic Essay.

Of the immense mass of Academic *Éloges*, and prize Essays generally, composed during the eighteenth century, no extended or minute account will be expected here. I have myself, speaking without the slightest exaggeration, read hundreds of them: indeed it is difficult to find a French man of letters, of any name during the whole time, in whose works some specimens of the kind do not figure. But—and it is at once a reason for dealing with them generally and a reason for not dealing with them as individuals—there is hardly any kind of publication which more fatally indicates the defects of the Academic system, and of that phase of criticism and literary taste of which it was the exponent. They were written in some cases—it is but repeating in other words what has been just said—by men of the greatest talent; they constituted,

with a play of one kind or another, the almost invariable *début* of every Frenchman who had literary talent, great or small. They exhibit a relatively high level of a certain kind of literary, or at least rhetorical, attainment. But the last adjective has let slip the dogs on them, for they are almost always rhetorical in the worst senses of the word. Extensive reading in literature was not wanted by the forty guards of the Capitol; original thinking was quite certain to alarm them. The elegant nullity of the Greek Declamation, and the *ampullæ* of the Roman, were the best things that were likely to be found. Yet sometimes in literature, as in philosophy, the Academic Essay produced remarkable things. And we may give some space to perhaps its most remarkable writer towards the close of the time, a writer symptomatic in the very highest degree, as showing the hold which neo-classic ideas still had in France—that is to say, Rivarol.[1]

Rivarol.

That "the St George of the epigram" might have been really great as a critic there can be little doubt; besides lesser exercises in this vocation, which are always acute if not always quite just, he has left us two fairly solid Essays, and a brilliant literary "skit," to enable us to judge. The last of the three, the *Almanach des Grands Hommes de nos jours*, does, with more wit, better temper, and better manners, what Gifford was to do a little later in England; it is a sort of sprinkling of an anodyne but potent Keating's powder on the small poets and men of letters of the time just before the Revolution. But the treatise *De l'Universalité de la Langue Française*, laid before the Academy of Berlin in 1783, and the Preface to the writer's Translation of the *Inferno*, are really solid documents. Both are prodigies of ingenuity, acuteness,

[1] There is not, I think, even yet any complete edition of Rivarol, though M. de Lescure some years ago devoted much attention to him. All the work referred to below will be found in the older *Œuvres de Rivarol* (published by Delahays, Paris, 1857), with a useful selection of criticisms. The present writer contributed to the *Fortnightly Review* for January 1879 an essay on Rivarol and Chamfort, which will be found reprinted in *Miscellaneous Essays* (2nd ed., London, 1895). Chamfort himself can only be mentioned here as showing, in his *Éloges* on Molière and La Fontaine, how insignificant such things, written even by such a man, can be.

and command of phrase, conditioned by want of knowledge and by *parti pris*. How praise Dante better than by saying that Italian took in his hands "une *fierté* qu'elle n'eut plus après lui"?[1] how better describe what we miss even in Ariosto, even in Petrarch? Yet how go further astray than in finding fault with the *Inferno* because "on ne rencontre pas assez d'épisodes"?[2] What a critical piercing to the joints and marrow of the fault of eighteenth-century poetry is the remark that Dante's verses "se tiennent debout par la seule force du substantif et du verbe sans le concours d'une seule épithète!" And what a falling off is there when one passes from this to the old beauty-and-fault jangles and jars!

The *Universality of French*[3] has many points of curiosity; but we must abide by those which are strictly literary. The temptation of the style to rhetoric, and, at the same time, "the solace of this sin," could hardly be better shown than in Rivarol's phrasing of the radical and inseparable clearness of French, as "une probité attachée à son génie."[4] How happy is the admission that poets of other countries "give their metaphors at a higher strength," "embrace the figurative style closer," and are deeper and fuller in colour! Yet the history, both of French and English literature, given in each case at some length, is inadequate and incorrect, the comparisons are childish, and the vaticinations absurd. In fact, Rivarol was writing up to certain fixed ideas, the chief of which was that the French literature of 1660-1780 was the greatest that had ever existed —perhaps that ever could exist—in the world.

This notion—to which it is but just to admit that other nations had given only too much countenance and support, though England and Germany at least were fast emancipating themselves—and the numbing effect of the general neo-classic

[1] Ed. cit., p. 277 *sq.*

[2] This is neo-classic criticism in its quintessence of corruption. What fit reader wants, or could endure, an *episode* between *Per me si va* and *riveder le stelle?* You might as well demand "half an hour's interval for refreshments." But your Epic must have your Episode. It is like "Where is your brown tree?"

[3] Ed. cit., p. 79 *sq.*

[4] This, however, is *not* in the Essay, but in a separate "Maxim."

creed from which it was no very extravagant deduction, mar a very large proportion [1] of French criticism during the century, and, almost without exception, the whole of what we here call its orthodox criticism. So long as it, or anything like it, prevails in any country, at any time, the best criticism is impossible; the "He followeth not *us*" interferes with all due appreciation.[2]

[1] Cf., for instance, Batteux, quite a reasonable person on the whole. He has no doubt (i. 80, 81) of the excellence, the almost perfection, at which French taste has arrived; he only fears that it may be impossible to guard against falling from so high an estate. This extraordinary self-complacency is a little less noticeable in England, but only a little. When we thought that Mr Pope had improved even upon Mr Dryden, and was in a sort of Upper House of Literature as compared with Shakespeare and Chaucer, we could not throw many stones at those who considered Voltaire a better poet than Ronsard.

[2] The corresponding chapter to this in that "History of Critical *Ana*," which we must not write, would be particularly rich. Every branch of French literature at the time is full of such things; the most amusing of all, perhaps, being Crébillon's malicious eulogy-satire on *Marivaudage* at the end of the 2nd book of *L'Ecumoire*, where Tanzäi condemns, and Néadarné is charmed with, the juxtaposition of words "that never met before, and thought they could not possibly get on together," and the depicting "not merely of what everybody has done and said and thought, but of what they would like to have thought but did not!"

CHAPTER III.

CLASSICISM IN THE OTHER NATIONS.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS—TEMPORARY REVIVAL OF ITALIAN CRITICISM—GRAVINA—MURATORI: HIS 'DELLA PERFETTA POESIA'—CRESCIMBENI—QUADRIO—THE EMERGENCE OF LITERARY HISTORY—FURTHER DECADENCE OF ITALIAN CRITICISM—METASTASIO—NEO-CLASSICISM TRIUMPHS IN SPAIN—THE ABSURDITIES OF ARTIGA—LUZÁN—THE REST UNINTERESTING—FEYJÓO, ISLA, AND OTHERS—RISE AT LAST OF GERMAN CRITICISM—ITS SCHOOL TIME—CLASSICISM AT BAY ALMOST FROM THE FIRST: GOTTSCHED—THE 'VERSUCH EINER CRITISCHEN DICHTKUNST'—ITS CHIEF IDEA—SPECIMEN DETAILS—GELLERT: HE TRANSACTS.

Preliminary remarks.

IT would be scarcely more than one of those sweeping generalisations which attract a certain class of readers, if one were to say that, during the eighteenth century, England and France exercised a reciprocal influence over one another in literature, the results of which the remaining nations did little but imitate. It is certainly true that, as regards the special subject of this particular Book—the criticism of orthodox neo-classicism in the eighteenth century—Germany, Italy, and Spain play a part to which justice can be very briefly done, while the rest may well be silence. Nor will Spain and Italy at least have much more to give us when, and if, in the next volume, we turn from the setting to the rising sun. But it will be very different with Germany, where almost the entire interest lies in the restless struggles and obstinate questioning which lead to Romanticism, and which practically show themselves from the very moment when the Swiss School aroused German criticism from its long sleep after Opitz. What has to be said of the Gottscheds

and Gellerts of the Northern Country had better be said last, so as to bring the matter into closer juxtaposition with the account of the Romantic Revolt itself. Italy (which has some interest in at least the beginning of the century) and Spain, which has very little in any part of it, must be taken first.

Temporary revival of Italian Criticism.

For some reason, or for none, the closing years of the seventeenth century, and the opening of the eighteenth, in Italy saw a very considerable revival of that critical spirit which, as we know, had died away so strangely, after its vigorous flourishing a hundred years earlier. It is true that this new Italian criticism is of a rather tell-tale kind—that it is, in great part at least, criticism of erudition and of retrospect. But Gravina, Muratori, Crescimbeni, and even Quadrio, form a group of no small interest. The first is a real critic of great, if not always well-directed, ability; the second, something of a real critic too, with amazing erudition; the third, the author of the first really literary history of a national literature; and the fourth, the first pioneer—no Lynceus, certainly, but still a pioneer-guide—in the ways of general and comparative literary study.

Gravina.

Gianvincenzo Gravina is one of those persons who particularly invite the student to idle *ægri somnia* as to what they might have been in other times and circumstances. A lawyer, a *littérateur*, the adoptive father of Metastasio, the joint founder of the Arcadian Academy, a critic of remarkable shrewdness, who wrote excellent things on tragedy, and thought his own bad tragedies excellent—he tempts one strangely. His most famous and most often quoted critical work is *Della Ragion Poetica*,[1] but it is necessary, in order to appreciate his criticism, to go to his *Works*[2] and read also the *Della Tragedia* and the *Discorso delle Favole*. The total effect is, as with most other eighteenth-century critics, a conclusion that the writer has not "found his way": though he is nearer to it than some others writing later. The *Della Ragion Poetica* is a most interesting labyrinth of cross-purposes. The

[1] My copy is the Naples edition of 1732. But the book had appeared some four-and-twenty years earlier at Rome (some even quote a Roman ed. of 1704).

[2] Leipsic, 1737.

strongly scholastic character of Italian serious thought, which we have noticed in Rinaldini only a few years earlier,[1] betrays itself in Gravina's opening *del vero e del falso; del reale e del finto;* and in an episodic discussion of the origin of Idolatry, which may seem absolutely preposterous at first sight, but which works itself into the consideration of Fable not so ill. The admirable description of Homer as "the potentest of mages and the wisest of enchanters, in that he makes use of words not so much for the complacency of the ear as for the advantage of the imagination,"[2] is balanced, at a page or two's distance, by a fling at the *perniciosa turba de' Romanzi.* The utility of poetry is gravely insisted on, and we are invited as usual to the study of the Kinds; but section xiv., on "Popular Judgment," is instinct with that Italian common-sense which had shown itself in various ways during the sixteenth century, through mouths so different as those of Castelvetro and Cinthio Giraldi, a sense almost epigrammatically concentrated in the phrase *ne con solo popolo ne senza il popolo.* In these passages of Gravina's there is to be found, put not indeed quite clearly, but unmistakably on fair allowance, a doctrine which hardly any critic of any day has sufficiently digested—that there is something in poetry corresponding, in measure and degree, to a poetical sentiment which only needs waking in all but the exceptions of mankind. What libraries of vain or positively mischievous disquisition should we have been spared, what unintelligent laudation of Burns when the intelligent is so easy, what unintelligent depreciation of Béranger when the abstinence from it is surely not so difficult, what idle and obstinate questionings about Donne or Whitman, Macaulay or Moore, and a hundred others of the most opposite kinds, if people would only have remembered our author's sound and sober law[3] that "in all men there gleams through [*traspare*] I know not what discernment of the Good" to which poets, if they know how, can appeal!

A large part of Gravina's work in the *Ragion* consists of an actual historical survey of poets and poetry in the spirit which, as we have seen and shall see, was so prevalent in his day; and

[1] *V. sup.*, p. 330. [2] Ed. cit., p. 12. [3] Ibid., p. 45.

his judgments, if a little traditional, are almost always sound, whether he is dealing with the classics or with the great Renaissance group of Italian-Latin poets.[1] Nor should he lack due meed for the word of praise he gives to Folengo, a writer little likely to appeal to the ordinary eighteenth-century spirit. When one thinks of the extreme inadequacy of French judgments of Rabelais himself at this time, it is no small merit in Gravina to have said, of one of not the least of Rabelais' creditors, that "he wanted only will, not strength, to write a noble poem," and actually possessed learning, invention, and fancy. The first book of the *Della Ragion Poetica* ends thus with an author who must have seemed, to the usual eighteenth-century critic, nearly as sad and bad and mad as Rabelais and Shakespeare,[2] and in whom it is not now difficult to see much Rabelaisian and even some Shakespearian quality. The second deals with the Italian vernacular. Gravina duly admires Dante; but his elaborate apology for rhyme is noteworthy and amusing. It was the way of the eighteenth century to apologise for all sorts of things—from the Bible downwards—that were not in the least need of it. He is a little less shamefaced on the question of the vulgar tongue; and says excellent things about the *De Vulgari* itself—that "discourse so subtle and so true." Indeed he conducts his whole discussion on the Vernacular, which is long, in accordance with the principles of the tractate, and gives to Dante in all nearly fifty pages, or more than half of the book, announcing his deliberate intention *giudicare spediatamente* of the rest from Boiardo and Ariosto downwards. The whole forms a very interesting survey of Italian poetry, though perhaps the most interesting of Gravina's separate critical utterances is to be found, not in it but, in his short Latin Letter *De Poesi* to Maffei, in which he speaks of La Casa as *qui alter potest haberi a Petrarca Lyricorum princeps.* It is a bold saying, but not

[1] He is very interesting on these, being the principal critic, betweep their own times and those modern days which have forgotten them, to deal with the subject.

[2] Gravina calls the opposite style to Macaronic not, as most do, *pedantesco*, but *Fidenziano*, from Fidentio, the *nom de guerre* of Camillo Scrofa, author of certain egregious pedantesque pieces.

hard to justify, concerning the author of *Errai gran tempo* and *O sonno, o de la queta.*

Muratori: his Della Perfetta Poesia.

The monumental work of Muratori in history and antiquities has overshadowed his accomplishment in literature; and some respectable books of reference hardly mention this; but it is in fact considerable. We have already had occasion to refer to the service that he did in editing the miscellaneous critical papers of Castelvetro, and he also did important work on the Italian Theatre; but his *Della Perfetta Poesia Italiana*[1] is a more original title-deed. There is no doubt that it had great influence: some have even thought that Luzán (*v. infra*, p. 548) was indebted to it for the impulse which enabled him finally to overcome the remnants of Romantic resistance in Spain, and to seat Neo-classicism at last triumphant in the country of Don Quixote. But it does not need this doubtful and reflected honour. The book is, given its lights and its time, a very good book. It accepts, without much or any demur, that notion of Good Taste which the seventeenth century excogitated and the eighteenth almost universally accepted, postponing inquiry whether it were the false Florimel or the true. But Muratori is both a historian and a philosopher; and he makes good use of both his qualifications. He contrasts, effectively enough, the supposed infallibility of Petrarch in Taste, the variety (without deserting this) of the sixteenth century, and the *pessimo gusto* of that which had just closed when he wrote. He will have it that Poetry is "a daughter and servant of Moral Philosophy"—in which case it must be sadly admitted that the mother is too often not justified of the daughter, and that the service is not seldom unprofitable. But he comes (perhaps inspired by Tasso) nearer to universal acceptance when he tells us that Poetic Beauty is "a new and marvellously delightful Truth," and he is specially copious on the Fancy—so much so that one imagines it not impossible that Addison may have seen the treatise, more particularly as there is much about "True and False Wit" in the Second Book of the *Perfetta Poesia.* He is, in his Third Book, liberal on the question of Useful or Delightful

[1] Modena, 1706.

—the latter will do very well if it is healthy delight[1]—and he discusses the defects of poets, and the various parts of poetry, with sense and discrimination. All this is of course still too much "in the air"; it makes the old mistake of taking for granted that *poesis* can be in some way strained off, or distilled from, *poeta* and *poema*. But this defect is to some extent repaired in the sequel, and the whole is a book far from despicable. The chief defect of it (a defect which extends also to Gravina) is the absence of comparative criticism—of the attempt, at least, to study literature as a whole.

Crescimbeni.

The two historians, especially Quadrio, are freer from this defect, though by no means free from it; but they compensate for this advantage by a much weaker dose of really critical spirit. Crescimbeni is not an unimportant figure in the History of his own literature, to which he contributed, after writing in 1700 on *La Bellezza del Volgar Poesia*, a regular work[2] on the whole subject as far as poetry is concerned. Part, and the best part, of this is made up of a refashioning of the *Bellezza*. Its contents, which are not contemptible, though too like much that we have already gone through to require minute attention, are almost indicated by its title—an enumeration of poetical beauties, cautions against defects and mistakes in the application of them, and the usual analysis of Kinds. The rest of the book is a really valuable literary encyclopædia, with extracts, commentaries, lists, indices, &c., "all very capital" in their own way, but somewhat out of ours.

Quadrio.

If Quadrio seems to invite more attention, it is partly because of his goodly bulk which fills the eye, and partly because of the oddity of some of his judgments, but partly also (in a third part) because he really intends to be critical, and because he extends his view far beyond Italian. The *Della Storia e della Ragione d'Ogni Poesia*[3] is a sufficiently ambitious

[1] Du Bos, a little later, with the apolausticism of the French eighteenth century, says bluntly (*op. cit. sup.*, i. 275) that "the best poem is that which interests most," and that "one hardly ever opens a poem for the sake of instruction."

[2] *Istoria del Volgar Poesia*, Roma, 1698 and later.

[3] 7 vols. (Bologna and Milan, 1739-1752).

attempt; and I do not think I know anything of the kind, by a single man, which is at any rate more voluminous. Seven big quartos, tightly packed, give Quadrio ample room and verge enough for proceedings alike methodical and far-ranging in their method; and his *Distinzioni*—the sub-divisions of his Books—leave few things unattempted. He is able to include both branches of Patrizzi's old division, *Disputata* and *Istoriale*, and he extends the purview of the latter as widely as he can, if not as happily. The good faith, and the less than doubtful judgment, of some of his excursions will be sufficiently, and here most interestingly, demonstrated by some instances from his English notes. After devoting great space to the usual general questions of the nature, origin, position, &c., of poetry, he has a proportionately large distribution of Kinds, extending not merely into Acrostic-land but into Cento and Macaronic. He deals further with Poetic Art and Poetic Fury, and, in successive *Distinzioni*, with Plot and Manners, Erudition, Verse in general, Italian verse, &c. Then he attacks the actual contents of his subject, and devotes the whole of a volume of 800 pages to "Melic" or Lyric poetry. It cannot but be interesting to the reader to note who represented English Lyric poetry to the eyes of a learned and laborious Italian Jesuit in the second quarter of the eighteenth century; but it is pretty safe to say that not one of a hundred guessers would name the trio in a hundred guesses each. They are Gower, "Arthur Kelton," and "Wicherley."[1]

He proceeds through all the divisions in the same way. His notice of Shakespeare is obviously a recollection of the milder view of Voltaire, who was a friend of Quadrio's. Dryden wrote a "tragedy" entitled *King Arthur;* Addison is treated at length, and with evident sympathy, as well as with at least

[1] I shall own frankly that, when I first read this, I had either never heard of Arthur Kelton, or had utterly forgotten him, and thought the name must be a muddle of "Skelton." What is known about him may be found in Warton, iv. 159, ed. Hazlitt (taken, as was probably Quadrio's knowledge of him, from Wood and Bale), and also in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. According to the latter, his poem in praise of the Welsh nation is not now extant or discoverable; and though a Chronicle exists I have never seen it. What made the Jesuit name Kelton at all is as dark to me as what made him transform Gower and "Wicherley" into "Melic" bards.

more direct knowledge than that shown of "Il Benjanson" (*sic*). There is a whole chapter on Milton, in which Rapin and the Chevalier Ramsay[1] are quoted. The critic is aware of (let us hope he had not read) Glover's *Leonidas;* and he is naturally copious on Pope, though his section on *The Rape of the Lock* shades itself off in the oddest manner into a Discourse on Hair, with references to Apuleius and the obliging Fotis, to Dion Chrysostom, and to Firenzuola. But Chaucer and Spenser are not (unless I have missed them) discussed by the citer of Arthur Kelton.

Of course there is no need to laugh at Quadrio; and if we do it must be done only in the most good-humoured and politest way possible. Doubtless we all make mistakes in dealing with foreign Literatures; and those of us who have dealt most with them have doubtless sinned most. But what is important to notice here about the Historian of All Poetry is—first, that he has shrewdly seen and manfully accepted, if not the necessity, at least the immense advantage, of comparative literary study; and secondly, that while emancipating himself to this extent, he is still under the domination of Kinds. If he had gone to A. Kelton himself, and had examined that worthy's works—not to range him under Melic or Epic or anything *quod exit in 'ic*, but—to see whether he wrote good or bad poetry, he would at least have been in a fairer way of escape. But the mania for Kind- and Subject-division, instead of studying poetic treatment, can hardly be better illustrated than in Quadrio, whose schedule of narrative poetry, for instance, is as complicated and as meticulous as a Government return.

Yet the value of his attempt, and in a less degree of Crescimbeni's, is very great: and it perhaps exceeds in *general* critical importance the results of the exercise of the superior talent of Muratori and Gravina. These latter said more noteworthy

[1] If I have said nothing about this excellent Scoto-French disciple of Fénelon, author of the *Voyages de Cyrus* (which all good little eighteenth-century boys and girls read), and writer of French which was admitted by Frenchmen to be the best (except Hamilton's) written by any non-Frenchman, it is neither from ignorance nor from *outrecuidance*. He takes place in criticism for a *Discourse of Epic Poetry*, prefixed to *Télémaque*.

things than the others: but they said them in a kind of criticism which, to speak our best for it, had already done all the good that was in it to do. Nay, their method of handling was likely to stand in the way of real critical advance or recovery, not to help it. Crescimbeni and Quadrio, especially the latter, recognised indeed, if they did not themselves quite understand, or lay down in so many words for the instruction of others, the great fact that before all things, and for some time at any rate instead of all things, it was time for criticism to "take stock"—that instead of theorising at large, and controlling the theory at best by a partial study of the classics and a very limited and arbitrary selection of the literature of the student's own country, it was time for him to take the whole of that literature, to compare it with the whole of the classics, and, so far as he possibly could, with the whole of foreign modern literature as a third standard. That is practically what we have been doing for nearly two hundred years past, more or less—for more than a hundred years past, pretty steadily and with a will. It is not done yet; and it never can be done wholly, because every generation and every country adds, in its varying measure and degree, fresh supplies of matter which cannot be digested all at once, but which must sooner or later be added to the rest, and may affect conclusions drawn from that rest, as vitally as did the work of Dante or that of Shakespeare. But it has been done, and is being done, after a fashion in which, before the time of these two Italian historians, it had hardly been done by anybody.

The emergence of literary history.

The promise, however, of this group—the elder of whose members almost belong to the seventeenth century, while the youngest does not come below the middle of the eighteenth—was not fulfilled. Hardly a single person among the other (and chiefly later) Italian critics of the time has achieved, or, so far as I have been able to inform myself, has deserved to achieve, any great reputation. Tiraboschi indeed continued the merely historical part of Crescimbeni's labour with an industry probably unparalleled in any other country. Metastasio, in his later days,

Further decadence of Italian Criticism.

occupied himself a good deal with criticism, and at an earlier time his *Estratto dell' Arte Poetica d'Aristotile*[1] would have deserved a good deal of attention from us. At his own date Metastasio is partly an eminent example of that halting between two opinions which has been so often mentioned, partly an inheritor of others' thoughts. He is in hardly any sense a Romantic; yet he observes, against the Dacierian extension and hardening of Aristotle's definition of poetry, that if this be so "it will be very difficult to find any writer who is not a poet"; and a little farther he has excogitated, or borrowed from the æstheticians, the all-important doctrine that the object of the sculptor is "not the illusion of the spectator but his own victory over the marble." But these things are late, transitional, and, perhaps, as has been hinted, borrowed. The earlier critical work of the polygraphic, polyglottic, and polypragmatic Marquis Scipione Maffei has no distinction: and the very names[2] of Palesi, Salio, Denina, Zanotti are unknown to all but special students of Italian literature, and probably to not a few of these. We must come to quite modern times—to times indeed so near our own that the rule of silence as to living contemporaries may often come into operation—before we can find any heirs to the glory of Castelvetro and Patrizzi, if we can find them then.

Metastasio.

The singularity which in so many ways besets Spanish literature shows itself, perhaps not least, in the fact that the establishment of the neo-classic creed in Spain does not take place till that creed is beginning to be, in one way or another, deserted or undermined in other countries. It must be admitted that there was some excuse for Don Ignacio de Luzán Claramunt de Suelves y Gurrea, whose *Poética* in 1737 argued Spain's poetry away, far more actually than Cervantes had ever laughed away her chivalry. It has been usual to represent Luzán as a mere

Neo-classicism triumphs in Spain.

[1] It fills the greater part of the 12th and last vol. of the Paris ed. (1782). The passages quoted are at pp. 29, 30, and 57 of this.

[2] For instance, of these four only Denina occurs in Dr Garnett's excellent *Short History of Italian Literature* (London, 1898), and that for his historical, not his literary, work.

populariser of Boileau in Spain: but this is not just. Any one who has followed the course of reading which this book represents will see that it was the *antiqua mater* of Spanish criticism, Italy, which really started Luzán's inquiries — that Muratori, and perhaps Gravina, rather than Boileau and the French schoolmen, were his masters. Indeed it seems that he had actually sketched, in Italian and in Italy (or at least Sicily), certain *Ragionamenti sopra la Poesia*, nearly a decade before his Spanish book appeared.

There was, it has been said, some excuse for him. We have seen in the last Book that, though isolated expressions and *aperçus* of remarkable promise and acuteness appear in Spanish criticism of the seventeenth century, it was always *impar sibi*, and was constantly aiming at the establishment of a kind of illegitimate compromise between the national drama, which the critics would not give up, and the general theories of literature which they did not dare—perhaps did not wish—to impugn. In fact, this state of compromise, by yet another of the anomalies above referred to, anticipates the similar things which we see in England and in France, in Italy and in Germany, much later. At the same time, Spain had been a special victim, with Gongorism and Culteranism and Conceptism, of those contortions of the Romantic agony which, all over Europe, invited the tyranny of neo-classicism. Also its great creative period had closed for some considerable time. Lastly, there had survived in Spain a kind of childishly scholastic rhetoric, which the rest of Europe, with some slight exceptions in Italy, had long outgrown. Ticknor, the most amiable of Historians (when Protestantism is not in point), calls by the name of "a really ridiculous book" the *Epitome de la Eloquencia Española* of Don Francisco José Artiga or Artieda, to which he gives the date of 1725, but of which the British Museum copy bears a date more than thirty years earlier.[1] People are apt to be so unkind to technical *Rhetorics* and *Poetics* that I own I had a faint hope, before I actually read this book, of being able to remonstrate with the Ticknorian judgment: but *no puede ser*. The work is dedicated to Francesco Borgia, Duke of Gandia—

The absurdities of Artiga.

[1] Huesca, 1692, 12mo.

the tragic elder associations of the name serving, to those who are susceptible to such things, as a sort of heightening of the farce. It consists of verse-dialogues, in octosyllabic quatrain, between a *Hijo* and a *Padre* by way of question and answer. Eloquence is angelic, celestial, ethereal, elementary, mixed, dumb, and several other things. Receipts and formulas are given for all sorts of compositions down to visiting cards: and the style of exposition may perhaps best be appreciated from an extract of two quatrains—

> *P.* La Imágen o Icon se haze,
> bosquejando una pintúra
> de algúnas cosas con otras
> con propriedád y hermosúra.

And a little later the Hijo says—

> *H.* En entrambos ejempláres
> resplandecen las figúras:
> mostradme, si [la Apostrofe] la Adversion
> encierra tanta hermosúra.

One is too apt to forget, in censuring eighteenth-century flippancy and superficiality in regard to the past, that all over Europe, more or less, this kind of childish stuff was still actually taught.

Luzán.

Luzán is at least not childish, though he betrays the insufficient historical examination and the hasty generalising which beset the whole school. He devotes the principal attention of his folio,[1] after generalities avowedly taken from Muratori, to Epic and Tragedy, and while using complimentary words to Lope and Calderon, indicates, without doubt or hesitation, that his heart is with Corneille and Racine. It is true that he is himself—as all these Eighteenth-century "classics" are without exception, save the mere school dogmatists or the obstinate reactionaries like La Harpe—inconsistent. Mr Fitzmaurice Kelly[2] goes so far as to say that there is hardly a proposition in his book which is not contradicted elsewhere in it. But that he at least meant to be a neo-classic, a Unitarian, a Nicolaitan, there can be no

[1] Published at Saragossa, date as above. A later edition is said to be garbled.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 348.

doubt, nor any that he met with no markworthy or effectual resistance.

The rest uninteresting.

The rest of the Spanish criticism of the eighteenth century has, save for special students of Spanish literature, and perhaps even for them, very little interest; and it is noticeable that, from this point, even the accomplished and indefatigable historian of the subject[1] practically breaks away from Spain itself, and gives a history of æsthetic ideas, not as they arose, and developed, and changed, and fell there, but rather as they went through these phases in Europe at large. The better known names of Spanish authors of the time, such as Isla and Feyjóo, have a certain right to figure here, but their literary critical work is only a part, and not a very important or interesting part, of the extension of the *Aufklärung*, especially in the forms which it assumed in France, to the most bigoted and conservative (except its sister Portugal) of European countries. This process, though perhaps necessary, is not in any department, political, religious, or other, particularly grateful to study; for Spain lost venerable and fascinating illusions — if illusions they were—to gain a very shallow, dubious, and second-rate civilisation and enlightenment. And this was almost more the case in literature than anywhere else.

Feyjóo, Isla, and others.

Feyjóo's *Teátro Crítico*, a series of Essays published between 1726 and 1738, and his *Letters*, which after a short interval he began in 1742, and continued at intervals for eighteen years more, are more philosophical and "moral," in the French sense, than literary. But the "Spanish Hotel de Rambouillet" — the "Academy of good taste" which met about the middle of the century at the house of the Countess de Lemos—included not only Luzán, but another *littérateur* of high rank, Luis José Velasquez, Marquis of Valdeflores, with Nasarre y Ferriz, and others. The whole school was rather anti-national, but Gregorio Mayáns y Siscar, their contemporary, did great service to Spanish literature by publishing the *Origins*, to which we have been indebted above,[2] and some by compiling a *Rhetoric*, tradi-

[1] Señor Menéndez y Pelayo, as cited before, in vols. 5 and 6 of his *History*.

[2] P. 333.

tional enough, but not specially "Gallo"-Classic. The famous Father Isla not only attacked the remnants of extravagant style, which had sought refuge in the Spanish pulpit, in *Fray Gerundio*, the one Spanish book of this time, which became a European possession, but left unpublished other critical work, especially in his poem of *Ciceron*, much of which is satirically critical of literature. Isla was probably more of a patriot than of a critic in his well-known attempt to claim *Gil Blas* for Spain, not merely in suggestion but in direct original. Nor should we omit to mention with honour, as members of that invaluable class of restorers of ancient literature which arose in almost all countries in the latter half of the century, Sedano of the *Spanish Parnassus*, Sanchez of the *Poesias Anteriores al Siglo* xv, and Sarmiento, the first general Historian of Old Spanish Poetry. Their work was, if a somewhat slow, a sure and certain antidote to the Gallicism of Moratin (Luzán's chief successor) and others of the later time.[1]

Rise at last of German Criticism.

Despite some exceptions (which only prove the rule rather more than is usual), and despite the immense dead-lift which at one time they gave, or helped to give, to criticism, the Germans have never been very good critics. There has always been too much in them of the girl in the fable who jumped on the floor to hunt mice, instead of attending to the more important business and pleasure of the occasion. And though that dead-lift which has been referred to began extremely early in the eighteenth century, its history belongs to our next volume. It is, indeed, less easy to effect the separation which our plan demands here than anywhere else; for hardly had German vernacular criticism begun to exert itself once more, after its long inertia since Opitz, than the double current of abstract æstheticism, and of study of Romantic literature, began to appear. But it would be impossible to omit from a gallery or panorama of Neo-classicism such a typical specimen of the *perruque* as Gottsched, such an

[1] As this Gallicism was universal, Mr Ticknor (III. v., opening) says, while Moratin spoke contemptuously of the ballad of "Calaynos," his opponent Huerta pronounced *Athalie* fit for nothing but its original purpose of being acted by schoolgirls.

eminent example of the "man who looks over his shoulder" as Gellert. And though we must leave substantive dealings with Bodmer, Breitinger, and their fellows and followers to that early division of the next volume in which, with leave of Nemesis, Germany will be compensated for the little pride of place she has hitherto enjoyed, it will be very proper here at least to mention the singular and interesting process of novitiate by which the Germans vindicated their character as the good boys of technical education; and, by sheer hard study and omnivorous reading, put the national abilities into a condition to turn out a Lessing and a Goethe.

Its school time.

The means—sufficiently obvious, but not often resorted to save by those nations which have not "decayed through pride"—were those of abundant translation from the more forward vernaculars, as well as from the classics. The German *Sammlungen* of the first half of the eighteenth century [1] are very interesting things. From French, from English, from the Latin writings of the previous century, they selected, and batched together, critical tractates which they thought might do them good, taking these to heart with Aristotle and Horace, with Boileau and Vida. That the assemblage had sometimes something of a "Groves of Blarney" character—that people like Camusat [2] find themselves jostling Pope and Addison among writers of Belles-Lettres, and Vossius and Casaubon among scholars, mattered not so very much. Manure, seed, patterns (to take various lines of

[1] One of the most important works of the Swiss school itself is Bodmer's *Sammlung Kritischer Schriften*, 1741, but this is for another time. Nicolai's *Bibliothek der Schönen Wissenschaften* (Berlin, 1757) and *Literaturbriefe* (ibid., 1759-66) perhaps show the movement best.

[2] I did not think it worth while to mention Camusat in the French chapter, though he is not quite a contemptible person. He was one of the tribe of French men of letters who, for this reason or that, settled in Holland. He has the not small credit of being one of the first to attempt a *Literary History* (Amsterdam, 1722, 3 vols.) *of France*. He edited part of the literary contents of Chapelain's letters, and did other things. But the Germans seem to have been particularly attracted by a *Lettre sur les Poètes qui ont chanté la Volupté*, which he wrote, I think, in connection with the work of Chaulieu, but which I have only read in German. It may have had, for them, the attraction of elegant naughtiness; but it has in reality very little either of the adjective or of the noun.

metaphor) were what the German mind wanted; and it received them in plenty, and certainly not without good result.

Classicism at bay almost from the first: Gottsched.

There are some very good authorities[1] who do not see much difference between Gottsched and his adversaries of the Swiss school, Bodmer and Breitinger. I am not able to agree with them. That there are characteristics in common nobody can deny,—that Gottsched is of the evening and Bodmer and Breitinger of the morning of the same day on the older arrangement, I do most sincerely think. And "the German Johnson"—so *echt-deutsch* and so little Johnsonian—is much too characteristic and agreeable a figure not to have some substantive place here. It is interesting no doubt—and it would give an excellent subject for one of the many not-to-be-written *excursus* of this history—that he, the analogue, to some extent, in Germany, of Johnson himself in England and of La Harpe in France, comes far earlier than these representatives of the neo-classicism which "makes an end" in countries far more accomplished in literature. But this is natural. The seventeenth century in Germany had but been one long fallow, producing nothing but not unfascinating weeds, like Lohenstein and Hoffmanswaldau, or wildings like Grimmelshausen. But, as in other cases of fallow, the rains of heaven had descended, and the winds had blown, and the worms had done their work of breaking up, and the soil, if technically "foul," was also fertile. Its production was necessarily mixed; but it was at any rate not subject to the desperate hook of the preceptist weeder, or to the traditional courses of the orthodox agriculturist. The German man of letters of 1700-1750 had the "Y" before him as few men of letters have had.

Gottsched took the classical branch of the letter unflinchingly, and quarrelled with others, like a good party man, as he realised that they were taking the Romantic. His *Versuch*

[1] *E.g.*, my friend Professor Elton, in his *Augustan Ages* (Edinburgh, 1899), p. 348. It is, I trust, not immoral, I am sure it is not illiberal, to edit a book without absolutely indorsing all its opinions, or insisting that all these opinions shall be one's own.

einer Critischen Dichtkunst[1] is frontispieced with a striking picture of Apollo, and the Muses, and Pegasus looking benignly at Bellerophon (?), whom he is just pitching off, and Mercury, probably flying, but in appearance rather tumbling, down the Holy Hill, with a copy of Horace in his hand, and a group of critics and poets and personified Kinds of poetry waiting to receive it in ecstatic attitudes at the bottom. It has three separate dedication-pages, in the largest print, to three fair ladies of the same family,—the high-born Countess and Lady, Lady Ernestine Wilhelmine, widowed Baroness von Plotho, born Reichsgräfinn von Manteufel, "my especially gracious Countess and Lady"; the high-born Countess Johanna Henrietta Constantia, born the same, "my especially gracious Countess"; and my ditto the high-born Countess Louisa Marianne, born the same,—not to mention a beautiful Ode, several Prefaces, an Introduction, and the full text, with translation in German Alexandrines, of the *Ars Poetica* itself. If writer and reader do not feel themselves safe under the convoy of all these charming spells and periapts, it is surely a pity.

The Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst.

It would, however, be most uncritical, and entirely unjust to Gottsched, to assert or insinuate that his apparatus is mere matter of parade. On the contrary, the preface to the second edition first enumerates as "the greatest connoisseurs and masters of Poetic," Aristotle, Horace, Longinus, Scaliger, Boileau, Bossu, Dacier, Perrault, Bouhours, Fénelon, Saint-Evremond, Fontenelle, La Motte, Corneille, Racine, Callières, Furetière, Shaftesbury, Addison, Steele, Castelvetro, Muralt, and Voltaire. For all of whom, except where (like Béat de Muralt, for instance) they have been reserved for reasons,[2] reference may be made to other pages of

Its chief idea.

[1] My copy is the third edition, Leipsic, 1742. The first is, I think, of 1730.

[2] Callières, a diplomatist and Academician, who wrote a good deal on various subjects, in his later years, has been referred to under Swift (p. 450). For more on him and his *Histoire poétique de la guerre des A. et des M.*, *v.* Rigault, *op. cit.*, pp. 213-217. As to Furetière, the agreeable author of the *Romqn Bourgeois* seemed to me to lie too far outside any possible limits here, though, of course, there are critical touches in his work. Some might even reckon, as an important if rather excess-

the present History. It afterwards specially alleges, as additional authorities, Riccoboni's history of the Italian Stage, an anonymous *Paragone della Poesia Tragica d' Italia con quella de Francia* which I have not seen, Rapin, Brumoy [spelt Brumois], Hédelin, Rémond de Saint-Mard, an English *anonymus*[1] on *The Taste of the Town*, Ramsay, Pope, Casaubon, Heinsius, Voss, Rappolt, and Sebastian Regulus his Imitations of the First Book of the *Æneis* (which last I have not read and do not think I intend to read). In the Preface to the Third Edition his quarrel with the Swiss school breaks out. We shall see in future, I trust, what this school taught; it is here of chief, if not of only, import to know what, according to Gottsched, the "Zürichers" (*i.e.*, those about Bodmer) did *not* teach and he did. "While I," he says in mingled pride and indignation, "after treating of poetry in general, have dealt with all its Kinds, and given its own rules to each, so that beginners may turn them out impeccably, the Zürich poetic has nothing of the sort." "Man would," adds Gottsched incredulously and detesting, "thereout neither an Ode nor a Cantata, neither an Eclogue nor an Elegy, neither a Verse Epistle nor a Satire, neither an Epigram nor a Song of Praise, neither an Epic nor a Tragedy, neither a Comedy nor an Opera to make learn!"[2]

The Slurk-and-Pott objurgation which follows concerns us little. But the passage just quoted has real weight. For it shows how, to the absolute and half-incredulous horror of one party, and probably by the not entirely conscious or intentional purpose of the other, the battle of Rule-poetic against Ap-

ive testimony to the rise of the novel, the curious picture of the girl Javotte —pretty but innocent to the verge of idiocy — turned into an accomplished and intelligent young lady by the mere reading of the *Astrée*. Furetière even defends this representation by serious argument (*Roman Bourgeois*, i. 171 *sq.*, ed. Jannet, 2 vols., Paris, 1878).

[1] This was James Ralph—the "Ralph to Cynthia howls" of Pope. It appeared in 1731, and deals with public amusements, from the theatre (which it defends from Prynne and Collier) to cock-fighting, auctions, and "Henley's oratory." It is rather amusing, and by no means, as Mr Pope calls its author, "wholly illiterate."

[2] It is notable that, since the beginning of the twentieth century, critics of the youngest school have been found Gottschedising in this sense, and proposing to judge the worth or worthlessness of criticism on similar cookery-book lines. I have seen an excellent critic rebuked by a reviewer for not "showing how to *do* something"—as if he were a dancing-master.

preciation-poetic had begun. To Gottsched the Art, or Science, or what-not, of Poetry is a huge schedule, which may be quite emptied of actual contents and yet retain its pre-established compartments and the rules for filling them; to his adversaries Poetry itself is a library, a treasury, a new world full of things and persons that cause, or do not cause, the poetic pleasure.

It would be unnecessary to analyse this not quite "the poor last" of Classical *Poetics*. It may be sufficient to say that Gottsched has his first or general and his second or particular book, the first dealing with the origin and growth of poetry, the character and taste of a poet, the species of poetic imitation, the Wonderful in poetry, the Admirable in poetry, and the like, the second with the usual Kinds in regular order. His occasional utterances are, at this stage of the history, of far greater importance. We find (p. 86) the sonnet classed with madrigals, rondeaux, and other "little things which are worth little." The old German *Heldengedichten* are (p. 88), if not so good as Homer, Virgil, and Voltaire, yet not so bad as Marino, Ariosto, Chapelain, Saint-Amand, and Milton.[1] Later (p. 109), "Among Englishmen, who are specially inclined to excessive fantasy, Milton in his *Paradise Lost* has exhibited everything that man can possibly do in this kind of *schwärmerei*." It is well to remember that the detested Zürichers were special admirers of Milton; but there is no reason to suspect Gottsched of being unduly biassed by this, either here or in the longer examination which he gives to Milton's sins afterwards. He is almost as severe on Ariosto (p. 209), arguing with unruffled gravity that the discoveries of Astolfo (which he sums up as solemnly as a judge) are not probable, and finishing with the sad observation that the Italian's fantasies are really more like a sick man's dream than like the reasonable inventions of a poet.

Specimen details.

The good Gottsched, in fact, is an apostle not so much even of classicism as of that hopeless *prosaism* to which classicism

[1] Gottsched, like a true *Klassiker*, dislikes and distrusts romance, ancient as well as modern, prose as well as verse, in and for itself. "Romance writers," he says (at p. 167), "know as little of the rules of poetic imitation as of true morality."

lent itself but too easily.[1] Even Voltaire is not sufficiently *wahrscheinlich* for him; and he asks (pp. 183, 215) in agitated tones whether Herr Voltaire, who has elsewhere such sound ideas on the Highest of Beings, has not made a mistake in the magic scenes of the *Henriade?* He is, however, no friend to prosaic diction, and stoutly defends what he calls (p. 263) "good florid expression,"[2] giving some better examples, from poets like Amthor and Flemming, than those who regard the German seventeenth century as a mere desert might expect. So long as he can get these flights under the recognised Figures, and so long as they do not outstep "the rules of prudence" (273), all is well. But the outstepping, as may be guessed, is not very far off. He finds it, under the guidance of Bouhours, in Malherbe of all remarkable places, and naturally much more in Hoffmanswaldau and Lohenstein, as well as in Ariosto and Marino and Gracián, —being as severe on *galimatias* and "Phébus" as he had previously (and quite justly) been against that medley of German-French which Opitz had long before condemned. There is, in fact, a good deal of sense as well as of minuteness in Gottsched's particular rules, both as to poetry in general and as to the Kinds. In dealing with these last he gives very extensive examples, and since these are taken from a division of poetry not much in most readers' way, they are distinctly interesting. But we must not follow him into these details; nor is it at all necessary to do so. The neo-classic critic has at least the virtue of adhering to his own rules, and observing his own type, with Horatian strictness. There is little danger of finding in him a politic Achilles, a prudent youth, or an old man who is good-humoured and does not praise the past. Gottsched says of Epic and Romance, of Comedy and Tragedy, exactly what we should expect him to say, if not exactly what we may think he ought to have said. He cannot understand how Tasso could hope to "unite this Gothic taste of chivalrous books" (p. 682) with the Greek rules of Heroic poetry; and he makes so bold

[1] Thus we are to divide the Wonderful in Poetry (p. 171) into three parts —like *omnis Gallia!* One may hesitate whether to emend "three thousand" or "three million."

[2] He quotes a passage which he calls *ein Muster des guten verblümten Ausdruckes.*

as almost to rebuke the great Voltaire for according the name of Heroic poem to the *Lusiad* and the *Araucana*. But there is a characteristic note in the words, "It is time to leave the historic-critic part and come to the dogmatic," which, it seems, we shall find—all of it—in Aristotle, Dacier, and Le Bossu. It is, in a different relation, like Balzac's *passons aux choses réelles*—"Never mind the Poems: come to the Rules!"

Gellert: he transacts.

Gellert, a pupil of Gottsched, at any rate for a time, and a pretty poet in his own way, betrays that tendency to compromise, if not actually to capitulate, which we have seen in parts of French Classicism. His principal critical tractate[1] carries a confession in its very title, "How far the Use of the Rules extends in Rhetoric and Poetry," and the confession is emphasised in the text. It comes to this—that the Rules are useful, but only generally so, and with a "thus far and no further." It is evident that, when this point is reached, the Oppression of Gwenhidwy is on the eve of descending upon the land of Gwaelod, the dykes are bursting, and the sea is flowing in.[2] We saw just now Gottsched's indignant horror at the idea of writing upon poetry without giving rules to anybody how he shall do anything. He must have been more horrified still, because there is an element of treacherous surrender instead of bold defiance in it, at this other view of the rules as not bad things in their way—to be followed when it is convenient and when you please, and broken or left behind when it is convenient, or when you please again. In fact, any such admission at once reduces the whole Neoclassic system to an absurdity. A law which may be obeyed or not exactly as people choose—a sealed pattern which is followed or not at the taste and fancy of the tailor or other craftsman—you surely cannot too soon repeal the first and throw the second into the dustbin. And this was, as we shall see, what Germany very speedily did.

[1] In the 7th vol. (pp. 117-154) of his *Works*, 10 vols., Berne, 1774-75.

[2] See *The Misfortunes of Elphin*.

INTERCHAPTER VI.

§ I. THE NEMESIS OF CORRECTNESS.
§ II. THE BALANCE-SHEET OF NEO-CLASSIC CRITICISM.

I.

In the present Interchapter, as in that at the close of the former volume, it seems desirable to make the summary twofold: in the first place, with reference to the Book which the chapter immediately follows, so as to provide a corresponding view to that given by the Interchapters of the two earlier Books in the volume itself; in the second, surveying the State of Criticism—with a look before and after—at the period which we have reached. This survey is here of even more importance than it was on the former occasion because of the greater—in fact the almost absolute—homogeneity of the subject. But it comes second in order, and for the moment we must busy ourselves only with that portion or side of Eighteenth-Century Criticism itself which has been considered in the last three chapters.

In one way Eighteenth-Century criticism has a very notable advantage over Seventeenth and Sixteenth. In the earliest of the three, as we saw, criticism exists almost without a critic. Its authorities are either men of something less (to speak kindly) than the first rank as men of letters, or else they devote only a slight and passing attention to the subject. In the Seventeenth this is not quite so, for Dryden is a host in himself, and Boileau, to name nobody else, is no common man of letters.

But in the Eighteenth the case is far more altered. English and French, the two leading literatures of Europe, are copiously

and intensely critical, if not entirely according to knowledge. Addison, Johnson, Pope, Voltaire, are all dictators of literature, whose fame and authority, in the case at least of the two last, go far beyond their own country—and they are all critics. In another country, though in a division, for reasons, not yet noticed, Goethe, who, if any one, is the representative man of letters in his own nation, is a critic. The second class of names—mentioned or to be mentioned—Vico, Shaftesbury, Lessing, Gray, Buffon, Diderot, and others, approaches very nearly, if it does not sometimes reach, the first rank. Moreover, criticism has enormously *multiplied* its appearances and opportunities of appearance: it has, in a manner, become popular. The critical Review —the periodical by means of which it is possible, and becomes easy, to give critical account of the literature, not merely of the past but of the present—becomes common. The critic as such is no longer regarded as a mere pedant; he at least attempts to take his place as a literary man of the world. If Italy and Spain fail—even allowing for the remarkable Italian critical group at the beginning of the century—to justify their old reputation, Germany, on the other hand, begins that career of critical hard labour to which she has apparently sentenced herself in perpetuity, and relieves it with more excursions into the fairer letters than of late. The French, though subject more severely than men of any other country to the idols of the time, continue to justify themselves both in the lighter and the severer critical work.

But the contribution of England is the most interesting of all. Our position at the time may be compared, with some advantage and no danger of straining, to that of Spain at a somewhat earlier period (see pp. 338-350). We do not indeed find, in any English critic after Dryden, formal expressions of such weight and pregnancy in the Romantic direction as those which the sharp-sightedness and patience of Señor Menéndez y Pelayo have extracted from the Spanish Preceptists. But the general tendency is even more comprehensive, if not yet catholic. In consequence, very mainly, of Dryden's own magnificent championship of Shakespeare and Milton, it was, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, felt in England that

these two at any rate had to be reckoned with; while Chaucer also had the same powerful recommendation, and Spenser had never lost the affection of the fit, though for a time they might be few. With these four to be somehow or other—by hook or by crook—taken into consideration, it was impossible for the worst harm to be done; and the peculiarities of English character, combined with the more vigorous condition of English creative literature, made the compromise work far better than that which had been in a manner entertained in Spain on the subject of Lope and Calderon. It might have been dangerous if Johnson had written the *Lives* at the age which was Pope's when he wrote the *Essay on Criticism*; but this danger also the Fortune of England—kindest of Goddesses, and most abused in her kindness, yet justified of Fate!—averted.

We shall, it is to be hoped, be able to show in the next volume how these conditions of Classicism in the several countries affected the rise or resurrection of Romanticism. For the present we must confine ourselves to the way in which they affected Classicism itself.

For the purpose we need not repeat, or even recapitulate, what has been said of its fortunes in Germany, Italy, and Spain, save to say that in the first-named country it only appeared to disappear, while in the other two it suffered increasing decrepitude. England and France are much more important and interesting subjects of consideration and comparison.

In both, as we saw, Neo-classicism is undoubtedly the accepted orthodoxy of the time. If that draft confession of Faith, which has been sketched in a former page, had been laid before an assembly of the leading men of letters in both countries, many might have taken exception to its actual form; but as for its spirit, there is hardly a Frenchman who would have refused to accept it, while not many Englishmen would have done so. At the same time—until, towards the later years of the century, the "alarums and excursions" of the Romantic rising recalled the orthodox to strictness—a more searching examination would have revealed serious defections and latitudinarianisms. Pope was perhaps the most orthodox neo-classic, in criticism as in creation, of the greater men of letters of the time; but Pope

was fond of Spenser. Addison had never thoroughly cleared his mind up about criticism; but many things in him point the Romantic way, and we know that some of the more orthodox thought him weak and doubtful. Voltaire, at one time, had considerable leanings towards both Shakespeare and Milton; and we have seen how Johnson, though he resisted and recovered himself, was at least once within appreciable distance of that precipice of "judging by the event," over which, when a Classic once lets himself slip, he falls for ever and for ever through the Romantic void.

Of lesser men we need not speak much — reference to what has been said above of the escapades of Fontenelle and Marmontel, of Steele and Kames, is sufficient. But all these things were as the liberalities of a securely established orthodoxy, estated and endowed, dreading no disturbance, and able to be generous to others—even to indulge itself a little in licence and peccadillo. Everywhere but in England the vast majority of men, and even in England all but a very small minority, had no doubt about the general principles of the Neo-classic Creed. They still judged by Rules and Kinds; they still had the notion that you must generalise, always generalise; they still believed that, in some way or other, Homer and Virgil — especially Virgil — had exhausted the secrets of Epic, and almost of poetry; and, above all, they were entirely unprepared to extend patient and unbiassed judgment to something acknowledged, and acknowledging itself, to be *new*. On the contrary, they must still be vindicating even things which they liked, but which appeared to them to be novel, on the score of their being so very like the old—as we saw in the case of Blair and *Ossian*.

The Nemesis of this their Correctness, as far as creation is concerned, in prose to some extent, but still more in verse, has been described over and over again by a thousand critics and literary historians. The highest and most poetical poetry they could not write at all—except when they had, like Collins, and Smart, and Blake, a little not merely of *furor poeticus*, but of actual insanity in their constitution, or when they violated their own rules by transgressing into pure nature-poetry or into

intense realism of anthropology. In their own chosen way they could at best achieve the really poetical rhetoric, but at the same time strictly rhetorical poetry, of Pope, and, in a lower range, of Akenside.[1] For prose they had the luck to discover, in the Novel, a Kind which, never having been to any great extent practised before, was a Kind practically without rules, and so could make or neglect its rules for itself. In another, not quite so new, their performance gave striking instance of their limitations. The Periodical Essay was a thing of almost infinite possibilities: but because it had happened at first to be written in a certain form by persons of genius, they turned practice into Kind and Rule once more, and for nearly the whole century—not merely in England—went on imitating the *Spectator*.

In Criticism itself the effects were not wholly different, though of course to some extent apparently dissimilar. We have seen how, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the necessary and ineluctable set of the critical current towards full and free "judging of authors" seems to have been resisted by a sort of unconscious recalcitrance on the part of critics; yet how they are drawn nearer and nearer to it, and, in Dryden's case at any rate, achieve admirable results. By the eighteenth, in all countries, the tendency becomes irresistible. The interest in literature, the bent and occupations of men of letters great and small, the new institution of periodicals — all combine to strengthen it: and every kind of critical estimate, from the elaborate literary history to the brief review, begins to be written, and is written, ever more copiously.

This was what criticism wanted; and it could not but do good. Yet the results illustrated, as mere abstract treatises never could have done, the deficiencies of the common critical theory. The writers save themselves, as a rule, from the worst mistakes by simply ignoring that of which they are ignorant. But in regard to the things with which they do deal the inadequacy and the hamper of their theory are sufficiently apparent.

Of course the deficiencies of Eighteenth-century criticism are to be easily matched with other, and sometimes opposite, de-

[1] I take these examples all from English merely to avoid confusion. The case in French is even clearer.

ficiencies in other times. It takes considerably more pains to get at something like a real appreciation of its subject, something more than a bare reference to schedule, than had been the case, either in ancient times or in the two centuries immediately preceding. It is very much better furnished with a critical theory (whether good or bad does not at the moment matter) than has usually been the case with Criticism from the early years of the nineteenth century to the early years of the twentieth. It is not even intentionally ignorant—its ignorance only proceeds from a mistaken estimate of things as worth or not worth knowing; and there is rarely to be found in it the bland assumption that "I like this," or perhaps rather, "I choose to say I like this," will settle everything, which has been not entirely unknown later. But it combines, in a fashion already perhaps sufficiently illustrated, the awkwardness of dogmatism and of compromise; and it is perhaps more exposed to those two terrible questions, "Why?" and "Why Not?" which are the Monkir and Nakir of all critics and all criticism, than the criticism of any other period. It is difficult to see how a critic such as Dennis could give any reasons for admiring Shakespeare at all, save ethical ones; and it is quite certain that a persistent *Te sequar* with the "Why Not?" will dispose of almost all the stock eighteenth-century objections both to Shakespeare and to all other suspected persons. In a certain way La Harpe had the advantage of all his predecessors, for he was at least consistent.

The theory not merely of the *authades kallos*, the "headstrong beauty," but of the "monstrous beauty"—the beauty which is beautiful but has no business to be so, the miracle-working power which does work miracles, but is to be forbidden as *magia nigra*, because it does not work them according to the rules—may seem itself so monstrous as to be a patent *reductio ad absurdum*. In fact it acted as such. Yet the logic of it is undeniable. It had all along been the unspoken word, but the word that ought to have been spoken, and had to be spoken some day. Nor need we grudge the admission that it was in a certain sense better than the practice (which had been often resorted to before, and which has not seldom been resorted to

since) of absolutely denying the beauty altogether, with the possible result of being, after a time, honestly unable to see it.

A certain number of points, affecting the criticism and the taste of the Eighteenth century in particular, remains to be noticed briefly before we pass to the consideration of the Neo-classic Dispensation generally.

In the first place, both could not fail to be influenced most powerfully by the constant growth of literature in volume; by the appearance, almost for the first time in large numbers, of the man of letters by profession; and, lastly, by certain changes in general education, and so in the quality of writers and readers. To say that the general reader first made his appearance about 1660, in what were to be thenceforward the two great literary countries of Europe, would be an exaggeration, but only an exaggeration, of the truth. He certainly increased and multiplied in both thenceforward; and, by an inevitable consequence, at once created the vocation of the writer and determined the cast and quality of the things written. Matters like the continued *engouement* of the French court and French society for literature, and the alternate exaltation and depression, the Secretaryships of State and the Grub Street kennels, for it in England, only concern us indirectly; but they do concern us. Prosperity and patronage enticed the literary man to work; poverty and contempt drove him to it, if only to hack-work. Influences came, too, from the subdivision of Kinds, the specialisation of study required, the reduction of mere erudition among those who were not specialists. I should suppose that, taking the average reading of those who had any reading at all, the late sixteenth century, with a great part of the seventeenth, was the most erudite time in the known history of the world. The level of general erudition has been constantly declining since, though with some fluctuations; and it was at a specially low level during the later eighteenth century. Although it is an auxiliary on whose aid Romantic criticism — or rather that catholic criticism which is neither Classic nor Romantic exclusively, but both and more than both—can by no means pride herself, there is little doubt that the increasing neglect of the

classics did help to discredit the criticism which chiefly appealed to them; while the constantly growing attention to certain kinds of physical science could not but tell upon the purely literary estimate. The historical studies which were so great a characteristic of the later century could not, again, but be powerful unsettlers of the fixed point of view; the ever-growing popularity of the novel was constantly lifting into greater prominence a kind of which the ancients had practically taken no notice at all; the equally constant development of the newspaper was always adding writers, who knew little of ancient rules, on subjects of which the ancients had never thought. Even without the special literary influences which we may hope to consider in the next Book, the general trend of habit and event made for a change in criticism; and such a change was imperatively called for, at once by that *reductio ad absurdum* of neo-classic strictures, and by that illogical tolerance of certain great writers of the past, to which we have given the joint name and status of its Nemesis.[1]

II.

We now have before us the more important, but also the more difficult, task of summing up the achievements and the shortcomings of the whole period covered by this volume—the *only* period, be it remembered, in which Criticism was regarded from the point of view of a commonly accepted, if not very commonly understood, orthodoxy. This of itself is an advantage, which, though it has not recently counted for very much, will never be overlooked by true critics. Even if we drop the *quod semper*, the *quod ubique, quod ab omnibus* has

[1] One word to guard against a possible supposition that the writer supposes Classicism dead. Nothing in literature dies: things only wane and wax, retire and come forward again. At this very moment there is even a sort of Classical reaction, which has shown itself in France for a long time and is showing itself in England now. When people are asking, not whether *Old Mortality*, and *Vingt Ans Après*, and *Esmond*, and *Westward Ho!* are good *books*, but whether the Historical novel is a good *Kind*,—when they argue, not that a play is decent, or sensible, or brilliant as literature, but that it is a "problem"-play, and therefore sacred—John Barleycorn is going to get up again, not to the surprise at all of historical students.

a weight which leaves it wholly for the other side to show case and cause against. Orthodoxy may be really right—really *ortho*dox; on that head it has at least an even chance against any of its opponents. Even if it is not, it has merits which they can rarely claim. It has no temptations for the clever fool, who is perhaps on the whole the most pestilent, intellectually, of human beings. It demands a certain amount of self-abnegation, which is always a good thing. It does not perhaps really offer any greater temptation to the merely stupid than does the cheap heterodoxy of other times. Above all, it directly tends to a certain intellectual calmness—to an absence of fuss, and worry, and pother, which is certainly not one of the least characteristics of the Judge. At all times the wise man would rather be orthodox than not; and at most times, though not quite at all, the wisest men have been orthodox, if only because they have recognised that every opinion has some amount of truth in it, and that this truth, *plus* the advantages of orthodoxy just mentioned, is greatest, and should prevail.

This will be recognised by all fair-minded persons as a handsome allowance in any case; it is surely a particularly handsome allowance when the arbiter happens not to be a partisan of the orthodoxy in question. And it is quite sincere. The present writer has emerged from the serious and consecutive examination of "classical" critics, necessary for the writing of this volume, with a distinctly higher opinion of them generally, with a higher opinion in most cases in particular, than he held previously on piecemeal and imperfect acquaintance. It is only in such a case as that of Boileau—where an almost consummate faculty of expression masks really small critical gifts, and where the worst faults of the critical character, personal rudeness and spite, are continually lurking behind what seem to be systematic judgments—that the result of the reading has gone the other way. At the same time, if we take the true reading of *illud Syrianum*, "Judex damnatur [*capitis*] cum [*in*]nocens [*culpatur vel minime*]," then the case of the criticism with which we have been dealing becomes somewhat parlous. It is all the worse because its worsening is

gradual and continuous. The sins of the earliest Renaissance criticism are sins chiefly of neglect, and are not as a rule aggravated by commission; while its merits are very great. We could have done nothing without it: at best we should have had to do for ourselves all that it has done for us. But the bad side of the matter betrays itself in the code-making of the seventeenth century; it is but imperfectly and unsatisfactorily disguised in the compromises of the earlier eighteenth; and it appears in all its deformity in the La Harpian recrudescence.

The fault of the whole is undoubtedly but an aggravation of what in Ancient Criticism could hardly be called with justice a fault at all, though it was even there a serious defect —the absence, that is to say, of a wide enough collection of instances from the past, and of an elastic and tolerant system of trial and admission for the present and future. We may *now*[1] use the word "fault" almost without qualification, proviso, or apology. The Greek could not, and the Roman until very late days could only to a most limited extent, exercise the proper sweep of observation and comparison; the man of the earlier Middle Ages was, from different causes, prevented from doing so to any effect. But the contemporaries of Lilius Giraldus who knew (or knew of) Chaucer and Wyatt —still more, in the next generation, those of Patrizzi who knew Ronsard and the Pléiade—could plead no such exemption or excuse. They had recovered the exacter knowledge of the remoter past which the Middle Ages lacked, the critical spirit which during the Middle Ages was asleep: and they had accumulated and were accumulating treasures, of completed mediæval work and of modern work constantly accruing, enough to give them every comparison, without exception, that they could have wanted. Their guilt was deepening daily as their opportunities increased.

For they neglected these opportunities, they "sinned" these mercies, almost without exception. If England in any way deserved the good fortune that fell to her at the close of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, it was

[1] Cf. vol. i. p. 485.

because she had never wholly denied either Chaucer or Spenser, either Shakespeare or Milton. But the just men who thus saved her were wofully few, and they were almost all of them followers of Naaman, who extorted a permission to bow in the house of Rimmon, rather than of the glorious Three Children, who would do obeisance to no graven image that any king set up. If Germany had the honour of leading the way—or very nearly leading the way—in the Critical Reformation, it was because, from the very beginning of her really modern literature, she had put faith in her *Heldenbuch* and her *Bergreihen*. But even this faith was rather hesitating for a long time, and it had no foothold in courtly, and curial, and academic places. The men who were the real pioneers in the revival or commencement of that universal study of literature which alone can lead to a universal criticism, were as a rule mere scholars and antiquaries, men like Oldys and Capell, La Monnoye and Sainte-Palaye, Sanchez and Sedano. Gray, the greatest man of letters by far who at least fumbled with the key of the enchanted garden, did but fumble with that key: and his successors Percy and Warton, who opened what they could, were not great men of letters at all. Abroad, and especially in France, their analogues, such as Marmontel, never got so far even as they did. In Spain it became fashionable to deny Lope if not Cervantes: in Italy Dante-worship was too often, if not in most cases, lip-worship only.

The spectacle of these centuries is almost infinitely interesting and surprising. I cannot, after having, with not a little pains, attained to some Pisgah-sight of it, exhaust my own wonder, especially in regard to the Eighteenth, or disentangle myself from that fatalism which I have already—with the result of some misunderstanding in the house of no un-friends—announced at the end of the First volume. We can understand the Sixteenth century, with its vernaculars hardly yet fully formed, with their greatest literature coming and to come, with an almost excusable distaste for the immediate past, and with the full eagerness—the honeymoon intoxication—of their intercourse with the classics upon them—we can understand this being excessive in admitting, in continuing, in caricatur-

ing, the critical principles of the classics themselves. We can also, if not quite so fully, understand how the dwindling enthusiasms of the Seventeenth, with its still greater sense of "the petty done, the undone vast" in the matter of mere erudition, and its thick-coming concerns of party politics, material progress, physical science, rivalry of nations, and the like—we can understand its sinking, in mid-journey or thereabouts, to an "age of prose and sense," where the prose was as certain as the sense was sometimes problematical. But the Eighteenth was beginning to be disengaged, to specialise, to take stock, to disuse the Chronicle and begin the History. How, we must ask ourselves, could men like Muratori and Gravina, like Addison and Johnson, like Fontenelle and Du Bos, rest even partly satisfied (for wholly, as we have seen, some of them at least were not) with literary sealed patterns which admittedly would not fit the greatest admitted literature of all their respective countries except France, and which presented, to the not insufficient self-sufficiency of Frenchmen, the proposition that, for hundreds of years, French men of letters had been barbarians, if not idiots?

There is no explanation but Grandgousier's, eked a little by the remembrance that—as we shall, it is to be hoped, see in the next volume —there *was* a searching of hearts, a moving of the waters, not very late, in fact very early, in the Eighteenth century itself. But, as we have seen already, the creed of the majority, the orthodoxy of the time, admitted no hint of this. It made a few concessions or extensions—till it found them obviously unsafe—in the direction of amiable but illogical compromise in particulars. It yielded up no jot of the general creed. It was still matter of breviary *circa* 1780, as it had begun to be *circa* 1580, that the Fable was the Poem (let us say that if Homer had written an argument of the *Iliad*, and had left off there, he would have done all that was actually necessary); that you must follow Nature by following the ancients; that you must not use epic verse in non-epic poetry, and so forth. In all countries, or almost all,—the extreme literary poverty and disarray of Germany here serving her in good stead,—these general assumptions, and the many others which

have been noticed in the foregoing pages, had narrowed down to yet others of the particular kind—that the pause in an English verse must be absolutely within a syllable or two of the middle; that a French Alexandrine must not have the impudence to overflow into its neighbour; and the like. And the whole sums itself up all the more strikingly—because of the doubtful and argumentative tone of the passage—in that memorable decision of Johnson's which has been discussed above, the decision justifying Rymer, justifying La Harpe, that we must not "judge by the event,"—that the presence of the fig is no proof of the nature of the fig-tree.

No very elaborate indications of the faults inseparable from this style of criticism can be necessary. That if carried out rigorously (as in some instances at least it was) it would simply have sterilised and petrified the literary production of the world, is of course obvious. That journey *au fond de l'inconnu pour trouver du nouveau*, which, with whatever success or failure it may meet, however dangerous it may be in some high functions and departments of Life and Thought, is the motive principle of Art, was barred by it at once. It was no question of "progress" in the very likely chimerical sense of improvement; there was to be not even any *difference*. "To-morrow" was not, according to the proverb, to be "a new day": if the men of this school did not go as far as Musette and pronounce that *Demain, c'est une fatuité du calendrier*, they held that it was to be as yesterday, and much more also. It is equally obvious that this doctrine positively invited indulgence in some of the worst faults of criticism. The critic who nowadays compasses all the reference shelves of the British Museum in order to find one discrepancy with his author, and then triumphs over him, is mostly confined to dates and names, or to more or less transparent erections of personal opinion (or personal ignorance) into standards, which the fairly intelligent reader takes for what they are worth. A hundred and fifty years ago the child of Momus had much better cards in his hand. The "exact scales of Bossu" were not only infinitely complicated and elaborate, but people in general, however intelligent, were by no means inclined to find any fault with them or question their justice. He had a hundred chances,

to one that he now has, of catching his author tripping under statute, and without any actual garbling or dishonesty.

But between the dangers on the great scale and the dangers on the small, which have been indicated in the last paragraph, there were many of intermediate kinds. Without absolute distrust of novelty or unfamiliarity as such on the one hand, and without a mere peddling tendency to pick holes on the other, a critic under this dispensation might, and almost must, find himself distracted, hampered, wellnigh mantrapped, in his critical investigations. A dreamlike network or chain of obsessions was upon him. To submit himself frankly to the effect of the work and judge it as he would a prospect or a picture,[1] a vintage or a face, was forbidden him. It was his duty, in the first place, if the author openly classed his work in any Kind, to decide whether it really belonged to this or to another; if the author had omitted that ceremony, to determine the classification sedulously for himself. Then he had to remember, or look up, the most celebrated ancient examples of the Kind, or those modern ones which had obtained the credit of being most like the ancients; and to decide whether the resemblance was sufficient in general. And then he had to descend — if descent be possible in this process of grovelling —to particulars, and see if *they* were "according to Cocker." If everything were entirely *en règle,* he was at liberty to admire and enjoy, supposing that, after the preliminaries, he had any disposition towards admiration and enjoyment left in him.

This is not a caricature; it is absolutely exact according to the "regulation" theory: and as the examples quoted before will have shown, and as hundreds of others might be produced to show, it is by no means untrue to practice. A critic, great, or generous, or happily both, might transcend his brief, be better than his creed, as in that noble eulogy of Gray's *Elegy* which makes up for much in Johnson's *Life* of the poet. But these were works of supererogation; and it is not quite certain that

[1] In judging pictures he would, indeed, have been almost equally liable to be "connoisseured out of his senses," but the interference was less authoritative. Towards the end of the century the prophets of the Picturesque tried to invade prospects also with their preceptism: but Nature laughed at them too obviously.

the exercise of them was entirely orthodox. The "stop-watch" *was* orthodox: it was the very centre and pulse of the machine of neo-classic criticism.

I do not think that it is part of my duty as a Historian to support this view by any further argument. I have given the strongest possible, in a minute, and I believe faithful, exposition of the *actual* survey, the *actual* opinions, the *actual* processes and judgments of neo-classic critics. If it is necessary to say any more, let it be this only. The weakness of their position is sufficiently shown by the fact that it could not bear the light of a historical knowledge of literature. There was none such, so long as it lasted: and when that light shone, it fell. The coincidences may not be causative; but it is for others to show that they are not.

If, however, any one should conclude from these strictures that, in the view of the present writer, the critical work of these three centuries was only evil continually, he would make a very great mistake. Moreover, putting all personal views out of the question, it is certain that this could not be the case. In almost all arts and even sciences, but in Art even more than in Science, the task set before the human faculties is a gigantic "Rule of False," as the older arithmetic books called it, in which, by following out certain hypotheses, and ascertaining how and to what extent you are led wrong by them, you at last discover the right way. The most grotesque error is thus a benefit to Humanity, which, indeed, sometimes shows itself conscious enough of the beneficial character to perform the experiment over and over again. And further, in all arts and in all sciences, but especially in the higher division of Art, the reward of these excursions is not confined to the somewhat negative advantage of discovering that man need go that way no more. Corollaries and episodes—wayside windfalls of the Muses—await, not so thinly spread, the adventurous and single-hearted practitioner of Allegory as of Alchemy, on the acrostic as on the astrolabe. And considering the secondary or parasitic character which so specially belongs to Criticism, it is inevitable, not merely that these "bonuses," these "extras," should be more abundant here than anywhere else, but that the regular profits

of the ordinary work should be considerable. Unless the critic is utterly incompetent and bad—unless he is a very Rymer, I do not say a Dennis, much less a Boileau—his mere contact with a new work of art must result in something useful, in a critical datum and fact for the future. It is very unlikely—if he is a person of even rather more than average brains it is practically impossible—that the exact equation or conjunction of his temperament, and his equipment, and the character of the work, will ever recur. It is, *ex hypothesi*, quite certain that it can never have occurred before. That he judges under a certain system, even a wrong one, will not detract from the value of the result, save in quantity. There will still be the actual fact—acquired to the stock of critical data for the future—that a critical power, say A, applied under the restrictions of system *m* or *n*, to work B, has resulted in the judgment *x*. And this result, in its own line and sphere, is as much a "thing," and a thing of interest, to the critical student of literature, as a new beetle to the man of science, or a new judgment of the House of Lords to the man of law. Nay, to such a student it has a higher interest still: it is in rank and line (*mutatis mutandis* again) with the work criticised, with a picture, with a sonata, as a thing of art itself.

And critics in these centuries, from these points of view and others, estated criticism more richly than it could have hoped to be endowed when the Humanists began once more to attack and defend Poetry, or when Daniello a little later set himself down to write the first treatise of criticism proper in a vernacular language. They attempted, and to the best of their power arranged, the more general questions of the Art, always with zeal, if not always with discretion; they did valuable, if also somewhat and sometimes mistaken, work in its intermediate regions; and slowly, grudgingly, but surely, they set themselves to the apparently humbler but really fruitful work of actual critical examination of literature, at first as it had been provided and already criticised long ago, at last as it was being provided by the flying day. Their own theories, right or wrong, they worked out with altogether admirable patience and thoroughness, applying them, too, with a faithfulness which

must excite admiration, if it cannot command agreement. And, as we have taken all fair pains to show, they not unfrequently strayed and stumbled upon outside truths, leant over the border of their somewhat narrow world and pried into others, after a fashion which, when the due time came, was sure to start more adventurous discoverers on wider paths of exploration.

It would be superfluous to extend this already long volume with any list of selected specimens of individual achievement and excellence. I hope, indeed, that this book may attract or help attention to some critics—Capriano, Cinthio, Patrizzi, Ogier are a very few examples—who are at present very little known: and to others, unnecessary to specify, whose claims have, as it seems to me, been underrated or misunderstood. But I have included, I think, no one of all the hundreds appearing in this volume who is not profitable in some way, for example, or for correction, or for reproof—who has not done something, if it be only in the way of warning, to help the student of all time.

We may also advantageously compare this balance-sheet with the balance-sheets of Ancient Criticism as given before, and of Modern in an anticipated draft. As compared with the former, Neo-Classicism has the disadvantage that, with at least equal if not greater narrowness, it is almost entirely destitute of the same excuse for being narrow. The Greeks of the great age wrote with nothing but Greek literature before them; those of the decadence and the Romans with nothing but Greek literature and Roman, which was for the most part a pale copy of Greek. The men of the eighteenth century, had they chosen, could have compared, with the practice and the theory of these two literatures, not merely the vast, the interesting, and, as "correcting" classicism, the inestimable literature of the Middle Ages, but at least four substantive and important literatures of modern times, those of France, Italy, England, and Spain. They not only did not do this as a matter of fact, but they invariably in practice, and not seldom as a matter of express theory, flouted and scouted the bare idea of doing it. They persisted in applying a travesty of the system of Horace, itself travestied from Aristotle, to these totally different products. Sometimes this resulted in the bland

absurdity of the *Battle of the Books* attitude, sometimes in the hardly less ludicrous compromise which, by stretching the faults-and-beauties doctrine to its farthest possible extent, allowed critics to make room, as it were by sufferance, for Shakespeare and Milton, for Dante and Cervantes. They could laugh heartily at a dinner in the style of the ancients, and their common-sense would at once have pronounced any one fit for Bedlam who attempted to journey from London to York bareheaded, clothed in a toga, and with sandals on foot; but in theory, and even partly in practice, they imposed the classical uniform on literature.

Still, they show, at least in some respects, better beside their modern successors than it is the fashion to think. We have opened the road which they barred, and permitted the exploration of the countries which they forbade; but it is rather a question whether we have profited as we should by this gain. It is still the very rarest thing to find a critic who, by equipment or even by inclination, is himself disposed to take a really catholic view of literature; and those who do endeavour to take such a view are constantly regarded with distrust by the general, and with a rather comic rancour by specialists. It follows that the modern critic is, taking each on his own scheme, very much less well prepared as a rule than the critic, not merely of the eighteenth century, as has been said above, but of our period generally, and very nearly as liable as that critic was to take hasty sweeping views in condemnation of whole provinces of his subject.

Excesses, moreover, of this kind, which critics from the Renaissance onwards committed, are a natural result of reaction in all histories. And in the History of Literature a hundred years of something approaching to Anarchy are perhaps not too much to balance three hundred of mistakenly experimental Order. We shall see the causes and the faults, as well as the excuses and the gains, of the Anarchy later. For the present it is fitting to conclude, with an acknowledgment anew of the merits of the Order also, in respect to the faults of which we have been so frank. They are the merits of a remarkable industry, of a commendable freedom from mere dilettantism, of

the discovery of not a few sound critical principles, and the registration of not a few sound critical judgments, of an experimentation and accomplishment which, even if it went wrong, serves as an invaluable warning to other ages not to pursue the paths which have so misled. And, yet once more, let us recognise that adjustment of criticism to creation—mysterious or simply natural as it may seem to different temperaments and different systems of thought—which we have observed before, in the cautious check of Renaissance criticism on the heady exuberance of the great Renaissance creation, in the support given by Seventeenth-century classicism to such mediate powers and dispositions as those of Corneille and even Racine, of Dryden and even Pope; in the salutary deterrence of Eighteenth-century orthodoxy, which saved us from more Beatties and more Anne Radcliffes when the time was not ready for Keatses or for Scotts. For so also in literature—and even in that, as some would have it, not divinest part of literature, Criticism—do all the works of the Lord, the lesser as well as the greater, praise Him and magnify Him for ever.

INDEX.

(Dates in the following entries are only given in the case of critical writers actually belonging to the period dealt with in the volume. To economise space, also, the kind of writing practised is only indicated where confusion is possible.)

Abrégé de l'Art Poétique, 121.
Academic *Éloges*, 533, 534.
Academy, the French, 256 *sq.*
Account of the English Dramatic Poets, 400, 401.
Account of the greatest English Poets, 438, 439.
Adagia of Erasmus, the, 11.
Addison, Joseph (1672-1719), 271, 325, 415 *note*, 432 *sq.*, 437-448, 463, 541, 561 *sq.*
"Admiration," 52, 270.
Adone, 259.
Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry, 433 *sq.*
—— *of Learning*, 191 *sq.*
Advice to a Young Poet, 452.
Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini — Pope Pius II. (1405-64), 18.
Æschylus, 61, 77.
Æthiopica, 77, 131.
Agamemnon, the, 262 *note*, 313.
Agrippa, Cornelius (1486-1535), 17 *note*, 28, 29, 352 *note*.
Agudeza y arte de ingenio, 349, 350.
Aguilar, Francesco López de, 346.
A King and No King, Rymer on, 394.
Alaric, 257, 265.
Alexander, Sir William, Earl of Stirling (1567?-1640), 196, 197.
All for Love, Preface to, 384.
Almanach des Grands Hommes de nos jours, 534.
Ambra, 24 *sq.*
Amour Tyrannique, 266.
Amthor, 556.
Amyot, 139.
Ana, the, 274-277.
Anacreon, 522.
Anacrisis, 196, 197.
Anchères, Daniel d', see Schélandre, Jean de.
Ancient Mariner, The, 497 *note*.
"Ancients and Moderns," 270, 320-322, 324, 327, 401, 412, 457, 503 *sq.*
André, Père, 513 *note*.
Andromeda, 161.
Anecdotes, Spence's, 332, 454.
An Evening's Love, Preface to, 383.
Annus Mirabilis, Preface to, 375.
Anticlaudianus, 67, 96.
Antigone, the, 256, 432.
Antiquity of the English Tongue, The, 452.
Apollo, The British, 406.
Apollonius Rhodius, 393, 531.
Apology of Heroic Poetry, 384.
—— *for Poetry*, 171 *sq.*
—— *for Smectymnuus*, 366.
Apophthegmata of Erasmus, the, 11.
Apuleius, 14, 254 *note*, 532.
Aquinas, 20.
Araucana, the, 348.
Arber, Professor, Bk. IV., ch. vi., *notes passim*.
Arbuthnot, 450 *sq.*

Arcadian Rhetoric, 186 *note*.
Architrenius, 67, 96.
Aretino, L., see Bruni.
—— C., 66.
Argensolas, the (Lupercio, 1565-1613; Bartolomé, 1566-1631), 346 *note*.
Arias Montano, Benito (1577-98), 336.
Ariosto, 53 *sq.*, 64, 85, 91, 293 *sq.*, 393, 555.
Aristophanes, 54, 254 *note*, 151, 308.
Aristotle, 6, 37, 38, 40, 41, 52 *sq.*, 60 *sq.*, 70, 80 *sq.*, 97 *sq.*, 103, 106, 213, 219, 413, 454 and *passim*.
Arnold, Matthew, 144-146, 219, 272, 277, 437, 462 *note*, 489 *sq.*, 493 *sq.*, 506, 512.
Aromatari, Giuseppe (1588-1660), 328, 329, 411.
Arte de Trobar, 333.
Arte Nuevo de Hacer Comedias, 50 *note*, 332, 343-346.
Arte Poetica, Minturno's, 51 *sq.*
—— Muzio's, 46.
Arthurian Romances, Ronsard on, 124, 125.
—— Chapelain on, 260.
—— Montaigne on, 139.
Artieda, M. A. Rey de (1560-1625), 346 *note*.
Artiga, Francesco José (*fl. c.* 1690), 547, 548.
Art of English Poesy, Puttenham's, 176 *sq.*
Art of Poetry, Bysshe's, 426 *sq.*
—— Gildon's, 429 *sq.*
Art of Rhetoric, Wilson's, 148-151.
Art Poétique, Boileau's, 281 *sq.*
—— La Mesnardière's, 265.
—— Laudun's, 127, 128.
—— Pelletier's, 117 *sq.*
—— Vauquelin's, 128 *sq.*
Artus, 124, 125.
Ascham, Roger (1515-68), 9, 46, 113, 148-162, 193, 224 *sq.*
Asselineau, M., 255.
Athalie, 298.
Athenæum, the, 40 *note*.
Athenian Mercury, The, 406.
Athenian Oracle, The, 406.
Athenian Sport, 406.
Atterbury, Francis, Bishop of Rochester (1672-1732), 449.
Aubignac, F. Hédelin, Abbé d' (1604-76), 241, 308-310, 357, 369 *note*.
Aubigné, Agrippa d', 505.
Aurengzebe, Prologue to, 384.
Autre Art Poétique, 111 *note*.
Avellaneda, 347 *note*.
Averroes, 20.
Axon, Mr W. E. A., 29.

Bacon, Sir Francis, Lord Verulam (1561-1626), 191-196, 206, 232, 318 *note*.
Bacon-Shakespeare theory, 207 *note*, 318 *note*, 486.
Baillet, Adrien (1649-1706), 102 *note*, 107 *note*, 241, 316, 317-319.
Balzac, J. Guez de (1594-1655), 241, 252-254, 257.
—— Honoré de, 557.
Barbauld, Mrs, 497 *note*.
Barbon, Le, 254.
Barreda, Francesco de la, 346 *note*.
Bartas, Du, 199, 505.
Basia, 68.
Bath-Easton Vase, the, 240.
Batteux, Charles, Abbé (1713-80), 522-525, 536 *note*.
Battle of the Books, The, 450.
Baudelaire, 87.
Bausset, Louis Francois, Cardinal de, (1748-1824), 304 *note*.
Bayle, Pierre (1647-1706), 316, 317, 363, 364.
Béat de Muralt, 553.
Beaumont and Fletcher, 378 *sq.*, 393 *sq.*
Beaux Arts réduits a un même Principe, Les, 523.
Beccadelli, 63, 66.
Beddoes, 87.
Bee, The, 498.
Behn, Afra, 426.
Bellay, see Du Bellay.
Bembo, Pietro (1470-1547), 49, 455.
Ben, see Jonson.
Beni, Paolo (1552-1625), 107, 324, 325.
Benserade, Isaac de (1612-91), 254.
Bentley, Richard (1662-1742), 24 *note*, 392, 400, 401, 450, 451.
Béranger, 87, 539.
Bergerac, Cyrano de (1619-55), 285 *note*, 297.
Bergreihen, 569.
Berni, Francesco (1490-1536), 29.
Bertaut, 281.

Biographia Literaria, 52.
Blair, Hugh (1718-1800), 419, 462-465.
Blake, 391 *note*, 426.
Blanchemain, M. Prosper, 120.
Blankenburg, 329, 330 *notes*.
Blount, Sir Thomas Pope (1649-97), 404, 406.
Boccaccio, 7, 8, 22, 43, 334.
Boccalini, Trajano (1556-1613), 329, 330.
Bodmer, J. J., 551.
Boileau, Nicolas B. Despréaux (1636-1711), 29, 34, 70, 241, 247, 278 *note*, 280-300, 321, 389, 390, 411, 455 *sq.*, 517, 526 *sq.*, 567.
Bolingbroke, 332.
Bolton, Edmund (1573?-1633), 187.
Boscan, Juan (1500-43), 337.
Boswell, 474.
Bouhours, Dominique, Abbé (1628-1702), 308, 315, 316, 330, 417.
Bourgoin, M., 240 *note*, 256, 258, 268, 287 *note*, 301 *note*, 304 *note*, 319 *note*.
Boyl, Carlos, 346 *note*.
Bradamante, 132.
Breitinger, J. J., 551.
—— M. H., 44 *note*.
Brocense, El, see Sanchez, F.
Brossette, Claude (1671-1743), 247 *note*, 290 *note*.
Brown, John (1715-66), 476, 477.
Browne, Sir T., 272, 326.
Browning, Mr, 404 *note*.
Brumoy, Père Pierre (1688-1742), 509.
Brunetière, M. Ferdinand, 113 *sq.*, 144, 280.
Bruni, Leonardo (often called L. *Aretino* (1369-1444), 20.
Bruno, Giordano (1549-1600), 95 and *note*, 97 and *note*, 101.
Brunot, M., 243 *note*, 251 *note*.
Bruttezza, Tassoni on, 327, 417, 418.
Buch von der Deutschen Poeterei, 360-363.
Buckhurst, see Dorset.
Buehler, J., 355.
Buffon, Jean Louis Leclerc, Comte de (1707-1788), 202, 519-521.
Burns, 87, 539.
Burton, R., 326.
Butcher, Prof., 61.
Bysshe, Edward (*fl. c.* 1700), 107, 426-429.

Cæsar, 152.
Calcagnini, Celio, 62.
Calderon, de la Barca, &c., Pedro (1600-81), 349.
Callières, François de (1645-1717), 450.
Camoens, 497 *note*, 516, 553 *note*.
Campbell, George (1709-96), 470-473.
Campion, Thomas (?-1619), 187-189, 199, 366.
Camusat, Denis François (1695-1732), 551 *note*.
Canons of Criticism, the, 497 *note*.
Capell, 569.
Caporali, Cesare (1531-1601), 344 *note*, 347 *note*.
Capriano, G. P. (*fl. c.* 1550), 47, 48, 219.
Caprice au Seig. S. Nicolas, 129 *sq.*
"Car of Cambridge"—*i.e.*, Carr, Nicholas (1524-68), Greek Professor? 193.
Caractères, Les, 301 *sq.*
Carlyle, Mr, 526.
Caro, Annibale (1507-66), 49, 91.
Carvallo, Louis Alfonso de (*fl. c.* 1600), 341.
Cascales, Francisco (?-1640), 338.
Castelvetro, Lodovico (1505-71), 17, 22 *note*, 31 *note*, 57, 80-89, 90, 91, 101, 215, 219, 233, 244 *note*, 265, 273 *note*, 326, 331, 341.
Castiglione, 93.
Castle of Indolence, the, 495.
Catiline, Rymer on, 396.
Catullus, 45, 81, 531.
Caxton, William (1442?-91?), 145.
Celtes, Conrad, 28.
Cervantes, Miguel de (1547-1616), 347-349.
Chamfort, Sebastien Roch Nicolas (1741-94), 534 *note*.
Champfleury, 110 *note*, 135.
Chapelain, Jean (1595-1674), 249 *note*, 252, 256-261, 297, 387 *note*, 393, 417.
Chapman, 199, 384, 387.
Character of Saint-Evremond, 271, 385 *note*.
Chaucer, 6, 63 and *note*, 146 *sq.*, 150,

158 *sq.*, 179 *sq.*, 388, 390, 393, 438, 561.
Cheke, Sir John (1514-57), 148, 151-153.
Chénier, M. J., 525 *note.*
Chester, Thomas, 6.
Chesterfield, Philip Dormer Stanhope (1694-1773), 476 *note*, 514 *note.*
Chevræana, 274 *note.*
Chevy Chase, 173, 443.
Choice, the, 488.
Christopher North, 496.
Christus Patiens, 357 *note.*
Churchill, 517.
Cicero, 11, 12, 40, 48 and *note*, 53 *note*, 59, 150, 471.
Ciceronianus, 10-12, 193, 276.
Cid, the, and the censure on it, 257 *sq.*
Cigarrales de Toledo, 332, 342, 343.
Cinna, 379.
Cinthio Giraldi, Giambattista (1504-73), 58-62, 81, 84, 90-92, 101, 214, 219.
Cisne de Apolo, 341.
Citizen of the World, the, 498.
"Classical Metres," 157 *sq.*
Claudian, 384, 405.
Claveret, 258 *note.*
Cleveland, 235, 377, 387, 421.
Cœlius Rhodiginus, 405.
Coleridge, 52, 145, 202, 532.
Colet, John (1467-1513), 15, 63.
Colletet family, 286 and *note.*
Collier, Jeremy (1650-1726), 392, 402-404, 433 *sq.*, 451.
Collins (the poet), 490 *sq.*
Colloquies of Erasmus, the, 11, 13, 14.
"Columbarius, Julius," 346.
Comical Gallant, the, 434.
Comparaisons, Rapin's, 310 *sq.*
Comus, 490.
Conceptismo, 350.
Concio, sive Merdardus, 13.
Condorcet, M. J. A. N. Caritat, Marquis de (1743-94), 525 *note.*
Conflictus Thaliæ et Barbariei, 13.
Congreve, 403.
Conrart, Valentin (1603-75), 240, 278.
Conti, Armand de Bourbon, Prince de (1629-66), 402 *note.*
Conversations with Drummond, 198 *sq.*
Convivium Poeticum, 13.
Cook, Prof. A. S., 30.
Cooper's Hill, 375, 500.
Corneille, Pierre (1606-84), 54, 258, 261-264, 297, 304, 378 *sq.*, 419, 504 *sq.*, 522.
—— Voltaire's Commentary on, 516.
—— Thomas (1625-1706), 316 *note.*
Correa, L. (*fl. c.* 1590), 107.
Costar, Pierre (1603-60), 278.
Cotin, Charles, Abbé (1604-82), 282, 287 *note*, 297.
Cours de Littérature, 530 *sq.*
Courthope, Mr, 444 *note*, 453 *note.*
Courtier, the, 93.
Cowley, Abraham (1618-67), 366, 367, 393, 404, 438, 439, 450, 481, 488 *sq.*
Cowper, 87, 476 *note.*
Coxe, Leonard, 148 *note.*
Craik, Sir Henry, 398 *note.*
Crashaw, Pope on, 453 *note.*
Crébillon, *Fils*, 536 *note.*
Creed, attempted summary of the Neo-Classic, 216, 217.
Crescimbeni, Giovanni Maria (1663-1728), 218 *note*, 324, 542.
Crinitus, Petrus (Pietro Riccio, 1465-1505), 27.
Critical Review, the, 497.
Croy, Henri de, 110.
Crusca, Ac. della, 92 *sq.*
Culteranismo, 346 *sq.*
Cultismo, 346 *sq.*
Cursor Mundi, 230.
Cynthia's Revels, 198 *note.*

Dacier, André (1651-1722), 81, 84.
—— Madame (Anne Lefèvre) (1654-1720), 508.
D'Alembert, Jean le Rond, *called* (1717-83), 518.
Daniel, Samuel (1562-1619), 189-191, 199, 226, 366.
Daniello, Bernardo (*fl. c.* 1530), 42-44, 213, 219.
Dante, 6, 8, 34, 40 *note*, 82, 160, 313 *note*, 334, 369, 372, 373, 405, 532 *sq.*, 534 *sq.*, 540.
—— Rivarol's *Preface* to, 534 *sq.*
Darmesteter and Hatsfeld, MM., 112 *note.*
Davenant, Sir William (1606-68), 365, 367, 371.
Davideis, 367 *note.*
De Arte Poetica, Viperano's, 103.
De Augmentis, 192 *note.*

De Divisione et Utilitate Omnium Scientiarum, 21 *note*.
De Genealogia Deorum, 7.
De Honesta Sapientia, 27.
De Imitatione Poetica, 102.
De Ludicra Dictione, 254 *note*.
De Perfecta Poeseos Ratione, 107.
De Poemate Epico, 265-268.
De Poeta (Minturno's), 51 *sq*.
De Poetis Latinis, 27.
De Poetis Nostrorum Temporum, 63 *sq*.
De Quincey, 47 *note*, 98, 219.
De Re Poetica, 353 *sq*.
De Scientiis, 21.
De Tragœdiæ Constitutione, 356, 357.
De Vanitate Scientiarum, 28, 29.
De Vulgari Eloquio, 40 *note*, 112, 160, 328, 540.
Deca Disputata, La, 95 *sq*.
Deca Istoriale, La, 95 *sq*.
Dedication of the Æneis, 385.
—— *of the Spanish Friar*, 384.
Defence of Poesy, 170 *sq*.
Defence of Rhyme, 189-191.
Defence of the Epilogue (to *Conquest of Granada*), 383.
Défense du Poème Héroique, 277.
Défense et Illustration de la Langue Française, 111 *sq*.
Defoe, 277.
Degli Autori del Ben Parlare, 328.
Deimier, Pierre de (1576-1620), 251 *note*.
Dell' Imitatione Poetica, 47 *note*.
Della Bellezza del Volgar Poesia, 542.
Della Crusca, see Crusca.
Della Difesa di Dante, 105.
Della Lingua Toscana, 47 *note*.
Della Perfetta Poesia Italiana, 541, 542.
Della Poesia, 106, 107.
Della Ragion Poetica, 538 *sq*.
Della Storia e della Ragione d'Ogni Poesia, 542-545.
Della Vera Poetica, 47, 48.
Delminio, G. C., 329.
De l'Origine des Romans, 274, 275.
De l'Universalité de la Langue Française, 534 *sq*.
Denham, 439.
Dennis, John (1657-1734), 387 *note*, 431-437.
Denores, Jason (*fl. c.* 1570), 106, 107, 219.
Derby, Lord, 433.
Descartes, René (1596-1650), 221, 278.
Deschamps, Eustache (? 1340-? 1410), 109.
Deserted Village, The, 297.
Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, Jean (1595-1676), 257, 277, 278, 369.
Desportes, Philippe (1546-1601), 242 *sq*., 281, 366 *note*, 450.
"Despréaux," 450, and see Boileau.
Dialogo contra i Poeti, 29.
Dialogo de la[s] Lengua[s], 335.
Dialogues des Dieux, 510.
—— *des Morts*, 503.
—— *sur l'Eloquence*, 305 *sq*.
—— *sur les Héros de Roman*, 292.
Dialogus in Defensionem Poetices, 27, 28.
Dictionnaire Philosophique, 517.
Diderot, 518 *sq*.
Difesa di Dante, 105.
Digressions sur les Anciens et les Modernes, 506.
Dionysius Areopagita, 22.
Discorsi, Cinthio's, 581 *sq*.
—— Summo's, 108.
—— Tasso's, 92 *sq*.
Discours de Réception, Buffon's, 519 *sq*.
Discours des Trois Unités, 262 *sq*.
Discourse of English Poesy, 176 *sq*.
Discourse on Medals, 439.
—— *on Music, Painting, and Poetry*, 473 *sq*.
—— *on Satire*, 385.
—— *on the Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy*, 384.
Discoveries, Jonson's, 198 *sq*.
Dissertation on Ossian, 464.
—— *on Phalaris*, 401, 402.
—— *on the Rise of Poetry and Music*, 474.
Dissertation sur le mot "Vaste," 269 *sq*.
Donatus, Ælius, 6 *note*, 48 and *note*, 59, 345.
Donne, 199, 489.
Dorset, Earl of, 376 *sq*., 439.
Douglas, Gavin, 218.
Drant, Thomas (*d.* 1578 ?), 162 *sq*.
Drayton, 199, 498.
Drummond (of Hawthornden), 198 *sq*., 356 *note*, 399.
Dryden, John (1631-1700), 56, 93,

119, 121, 144, 232, 237 and *motto*, 262, 264, 271, 300, 314 *note*, 322, 332, 344, 347, 369, 371-391, 393, 403, 411, 413, 416, 417, 425 *sq.*, 432, 438, 439, 449, 454, 472 *note*, 485, 489 *sq.*, 503, 560.
Du Bartas, 313, 369.
Du Bellay, Joachim (1524-60), 111-116, 221, 233, 369.
Du Bos, Jean Baptiste, Abbé (1670-1742), 511-513, 542 *note*.
Dunton, John (1659-1733), 406.
Du Pont, Gratien (*fl. c.* 1540), 110.
Dyer, Sir Edward, 165.
—— John, 421, 478.

Edgeworth, Miss, 97, 348.
Edwards, Thomas (1699-1757), 497 *note*.
Ejemplar Poético, 338, 341.
E. K., 224.
Eléments de Littérature, 526 *sq.*
Elements of Criticism, the, 465-470.
Éloges, D'Alembert's, 519.
—— Fontenelle's, 506.
—— Other, 529, 533.
Elton, Professor, 552.
Encina, Juan del (1468-1534), 335.
English Parnassus, the, 426 *note*.
Entretiens d'Ariste, 308.
Ephemerides of Phialo, 169 *note*.
Epistle to Augustus, Pope's, 453 *sq.*
Epistles, Ovid's, Dryden's Preface to, 384.
Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum, 14 *note*.
Epitome de la Eloquencia Española, 547, 548.
Erasmus, Desiderius (1467-1536), 9-16, 61, 65, 75, 85, 193, 276, 352 *note*.
Ercolano, L', 49.
Eschenbach, Wolfram von, 230.
Espinel, Vicente (1544-1634), 337.
Essai sur la Poésie Epique, 516.
—— *sur le Beau*, 513 *note*.
—— *sur le Goût*, 514, 528.
—— *sur les Éloges*, 529.
—— *sur les Romans*, 527.
Essay of Dramatic Poesy, 332, 376-382.
—— *of Heroic Plays*, 383.
—— *on a New Species of Writing*, 497 *note*.
—— *on Criticism*, 453 *sq.*
—— *on Modern Education*, 452.
Essay on Poetry (Temple's), 401.
—— *on the Genius of Shakespeare*, 434.
—— *on Translated Verse*, 404.
—— *upon Poetry and Painting*, 497 *note*.
Essays, Collier's, 404.
—— *Critical* (Scott's), 500.
—— Montaigne's, 138 *sq.*
—— *Moral and Literary*, 499.
Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times, 476.
Estratto dell' Arte Poetica d'Aristotile, 546.
Etherege, 463.
Euphuism, 225 *sq.*
Euripides, 14, 54.
Evening's Love, An, Preface to, 383.
Examens, Corneille's, 262 *sq.*
Expostulatio Spongiæ, 346.

Fables, Dryden's, Preface to, 386.
Fabri, Pierre (*fl. c.* 1520), 110.
Fabriano, see Gilio.
Fabricius, Georgius (1515-71), 108, 181, 353-355.
Faerie Queene, the, 168.
"Fatura," 63.
Fauchet, Claude (1530-1601), 101, 135.
Feillet, M., 258.
Feltre, Vittorino da, 20.
Fénelon, Francois de Salignac de La Mothe (1651-1715), 241, 272, 301, 304-308.
Feyjóo y Montenegro, Benito Geronimo (1701-64), 549.
"Fidenziano," 540 *note*.
Fielding, 349.
Filosofía Antigua Poética, 338-340.
Fingal, 464.
Flaubert, G., 12, 302.
Flecknoe, 377.
Flemming, 556.
Fletcher, 378 *sq.*
Floriant et Florete, 394 *note*.
Folengo, 540.
Fontaine, Ch. (1513-88?), 116.
Fontenelle, Bernard le Bovier de (1657-1757), 292, 416, 419, 423 *motto*, 501-507.
Fracastoro, Jeronimo (1483-1553), 44-46, 67, 88, 90, 214, 217, 219.
Franciade, Preface to the, 120 *sq.*
Fraunce, Abraham (*fl. c.* 1590), 186 *note*, 199.

Fray Gerundio, 550.
Froissart, 141.
Froude, Mr, 5.
Fulgentius, 8, 397.
Fureteriana, 274 *note*.
Furetière, Antoine (1620-88), 553, 554 *note*.
"Furor Poeticus," 97 and *note*, 267, 268, 295, 340, 410, 420.

"Gallo-Classic," the term, 411.
Gambara, F. (*fl. c.* 1580), 107 *note*, 278 *note*.
Garbett, Rev. J., 298 *note*, 372 *note*.
Garnett, Dr, 546 *note*.
Gascoigne, George (1525?-77), 162 *sq.*, 177, 226, 429.
Gautier, Th., 282 *note*, 519 *note*.
Gayley and Scott, Professors, 195 *note*, 329 *note*.
Gellert, Christian Furchtegott (1715-69), 557.
Gentleman's Magazine, the, 497.
Gerusalemme Liberata, 18, 87 *sq.*
Gibert, Balthasar (1662-1741), 319, 320.
Gifford, 198 *note*, 534.
Gildon, Charles (1665-1724), 429, 430.
Gilio da Fabriano Antonio (*fl. c.* 1580), 104.
Girac, Paul Thomas de (?-1663), 278 *note*.
Giraldi, Cinthio, see Cinthio.
Giraldus, Lilius, see Lilius.
Goethe, 356, 372, 560.
Goldsmith, Oliver (1728-74), 429, 498.
Gondibert, Preface to, 365, 367-371.
Góngora y Argote, Luis de (1561-1627), 349.
Gongorism, 331, 414.
Gonzales de Salas (*fl. c.* 1630), 341, 342, 349.
Gorboduc, 173, 206, 374, 503.
Gorgias, the, 82.
Gosson, Stephen (1555-1624), 169-171.
Gottsched, Johann Christopher (1700-66), 552-557.
Gournay, Mlle. de, 251, 253, 254.
Gower, 146 *sq.*, 179 *sq.*
Gracián, Balthasar (1584-1658?), 349, 350.
Granada, Luis de (1504-81), 336.
Gravina, Gianvincenzo (1664-1718), 272, 324, 513, 538-541.
Gray, 461, 478, 479, 487, 491 *sq.*, 500, 569.
Grazzini, Ant. Francesco ["Il Lasca"] (1403-83), 48, 59.
Grévin, Jacques (1538?-70), 127.
Grimmelshausen, 552.
Grongar Hill, 488, 500.
Grosart, Dr, 196 *note*.
Grotius, 359.
Grundlicher Bericht des Deutschen Meistergesangs, 360 *note*.
Guarini, Battista (1537-1612), poet, 107, 199.
Guarino (?-1460), humanist, 18.
Guest, Dr, 178, 188.
Guicciardini, 331.

Habington, 485.
Hamelius, Herr, 425 *note*, 452 *note*, 448 *note*.
Hamilton, Anthony, 502.
Hannay, Mr David, 332 *note*, 341, 350.
Hardy, Alexandre (1560-1631), 255 *note*.
Harington, Sir John (1561-1612), 183 *note*, 186, 199.
Harris, James (1709-80), 473-476.
Harvey, Gabriel (1545-1630), 148, 165 *sq.*
Hawes, Stephen (?-1523?), 146, 147.
Hazlitt, 145, 219, 372 *note*, 496.
Heads of an Answer to Rymer, 373 *note*, 397 *note*.
Hédelin, see Aubignac.
Hegel, 274, 527 *note*.
Heinsius, Daniel (1580-1655), 356, 357.
Heldenbuch, 569.
Heliodorus, 77, 131.
Henriade, the, 514 *note*, 522, 526.
Henry IV., Dennis on, 434.
Herbert, G., 87.
Héricault, M. Ch. d', 112 *note*.
Hermaphroditus, 66 *note*.
Hermes, 473.
Hermogenes, 319, 329.
Hero and Leander, 74.
"Heroic Play," the, 367 *sq.*
"Heroic Poem," the, 367 *sq.*
Hessus, Eobanus, 14, 28.
Heywood, Thomas, 398 *note*.

Histoire du Théâtre Français, Fontenelle's, 505.
—— the Frères Parfait's, 527.
Historia de las Ideas Estéticas en España, 331-351 *passim*.
History of the Rise and Progress of Poetry, 476.
—— *of the Royal Society*, 398.
Hobbes, Thomas (1588-1679), 40, 367-371.
Hoffmanswaldau, 552.
Home, Henry, see Kames.
Homer, 25, 31-35, 47, 52, 74, 86, 99, 122-126, 130-132, 141, 310 *sq.*
Horace, 6, 9, 129 *sq.* and *passim*.
Howard, Edward, 367 *note*.
—— Henry, see Surrey, Earl of.
—— J., 367 *note*.
—— Sir Robert (*d.* 1698: his birthdate and those of his brothers E. and J. are very uncertain), 376 *sq.*
Howell's *Letters*, 371 *note*.
Hudibras, 513 *note*.
Huerta, Vicente Garcia de la (1730?-87), 550 *note*.
Huet, Pierre Daniel (1630-1721), bishop of Avranches, 274, 275.
Huetiana, 275.
Hugo, Victor, 87.
Hume, Alexander, 209 *note*.
—— David, 462.
Hunt, Leigh, 372 *note*.
Hurd, 469.
Hutten, Ulrich von (1488-1523), 352 *note*.

Iago, Rymer on, 395, 396.
Ibrahim, 265.
Idler, the, 484.
I Fiori della Poesia, 107.
Il Castellano, 40.
"Il Lasca," see Grazzini.
Il Sogno, 106, 107.
"Imagination," Addison on, 443-448.
"Imlac," 484, 485.
Impartial Critic, The, 432.
Indian Emperor, The, Preface to, 382.
Inés de Castro, 507.
Inquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe, 498.
Institutiones Oratoriæ, Voss's, 358-360.
—— *Poeticæ*, Spanmüller's, 355.
I Romanzi, 63.
Isidore (of Seville), 8, 334.
I Simillimi, 38.
Iskra, Augustinus, 360, 361.
Isla, José Francisco, Father (1703-81), 550.
Istoria del Volgar Poesia, 542.
Italia Liberata, 38.

James the First (1566-1625), 177, 178.
Jerome, St, Erasmus on, 15, 16.
Jeronimo, 235.
Johannes Secundus, 27.
John of Garlandia, 14.
—— of Salisbury, 8.
Johnson, Samuel (1709-84), 145, 375, 429, 434, 437, 458, 465, 474, 477-496, 512, 552, 561, 571.
Jonson, Ben (1573-1637), 42, 71, 138, 144, 156, 185 *note*, 197-209, 227 *sq.*, 233, 262, 271, 367, 368, 370 *sq.*, 393 *sq.*, 486 *note*.
Journal des Savants, 316.
Jugements des Savants, 276.
———— *sur les auteurs que ont traité de la Rhétorique*, 319, 320.
Julius Cæsar, Rymer on, 396.
—— Dennis on, 434.
Juvenal, Dryden's Preface to, 385.

Kames, Henry Home, Lord (1696-1782), 465-470.
Käsenbrot, see Olmucensis.
Keats, 280, 412, 485.
Keble, 87, 312 *note*, 372 *note*.
Kelly, Mr J. Fitzmaurice, 332 *note*, 335 *note*, 348 *note*, 350.
Kelton, Arthur (*fl. c.* 1550), 542 *note*.
Ker, Mr W. P., 93 *note*, 332 *note*, 373 *sq.*
Kingsley, Ch., 124, 161.
Knox, Vicesimus (1752-1821), 499.

La Boétie, E. de, 71.
La Bruyère, Jean de (1645-96), 241, 300-304, 355, 521.
Labyrinthus, 8, 24, 64, 231.
La Casa, 93, 167 *note*, 512, 540 *note*.
La Croze, J. Cornand de (not to be confused with his contemporary, M. Veyssière de la Croze, a learned but fantastic philologist and antiquary), 406 *note*.
La Cueva, Juan de (1550-1606), 338, 340, 341, 355.

La Fontaine, 293 *sq.*, 298, 519, 521.
La Harpe, Jean François de (1739-1803), 530-533, 564, 571.
Lamb, Charles, 145, 496.
La Mesnardière, Hippolyte Jules Pelet de (1616-63), 265.
La Monnoye, Bernard de (1641-1728), 273 *note*, 316 *note*, 527 *note*.
La Mothe le Vayer, F. de (1588-1672), 251.
La Motte, A. Houdard de (1672-1731), 321, 507-509.
—— Charles (? - ?), Irish divine and critic, 497 *note*.
Lancelot, 124, 260.
Landi, Ortensio (1501-60), 29.
Langbaine, Gerard (1656-92), 400, 401, 430.
Langlois, M. G., 109 *note*.
Langhorne, 449.
Langland, 179 *sq.*
La Place, translator of Shakespeare, 527, 528.
Lasca, Il, see Grazzini.
La Taille, Jacques de (1541?-62?), 127.
—— Jean de (1540?-1608), 127.
Latimer, 150.
Laudun, Pierre de (1575-1629), 127, 128.
Le Bossu, René (1631-80), 300, 314, 315.
Le Clerc, Jean (1657-1736), 276, 277, 363, 364.
Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, 462 *sq.*
Lee, Mr Sidney, 400 *note*.
Lemaître, M. Jules, 259 *note*.
Lemercier, N., 530.
Le Moyne, Père, 257, 393, 505.
Lessing, 219, 356, 410.
L'Estrange, 392, 451.
Le Tre Sorelle, 93.
Letter to a Young Clergyman, 452.
Letters on Chivalry, 469.
Letters, Pope's, 453.
Lettre de M. de la Visclède, 517.
Lettres aux Auteurs de la Gazette Littéraire, 517.
Lettres Galantes et Philosophiques, 510.
Lettres Persanes, 514.
Lettres sur les Anglais, 516.
Lilius Gregorius Giraldus (1478-1552), 63-68, 96 *note*, 413.
Lilly, William, 65.
L'Infarinato, 92.
"L'Infortuné," 110.
Lionardi, Alessandro (*fl. c.* 1550), 47.
Lives of the Poets, Heywood's, 398 *note*.
—— Johnson's, 480 *sq.*, 486 *sq.*
—— Winstanley's, 400.
Locke, John (1632-1704), 53, 446 *sq.*, 468.
Lodge, Thomas (1558?-1625), 170, 171.
Logic and Poetry, 20 *note*.
Lohenstein, 552.
Longfellow, 87.
Longinus, 6, 34, 206, 220, 288 *sq.*, 302, 319, 373, 430, 435.
Longolius (Christophe de Longueil), (1490-1522), 11, 67, 276.
Lope de Vega Carpio, Felix (1562-1635), 332, 343-347, 380 *note*.
Love's Labour's Lost, Collier on, 403.
Lucan, 199.
Lucian, 24 *note*, 330, 402.
Lucilius, 254 *note*.
Lucretius, 33, 40, 88, 139, 140, 202.
Lutrin, Le, 290.
Luzan Claramunt de Suelves y Gurrea, Ignacio de (1702-54), 347, 350, 414, 541, 546, 547.
Lycidas, 490, 500.
Lydgate, 146 *sq.*, 179 *sq.*

Macaulay, 320, 391 *sq.*, 401 *sq.*, 492, 498.
Machiavelli, 54.
"Machines" and "Machinery," 369 *sq.*, 435.
Mackenzie, Sir George, 320.
Macpherson (*Ossian*), 464.
Macrobius, 22 *note*.
Maffei, Francisco Scipione, Marquis (1676-1755), 546.
Maggi, 41, 42.
Mairet, Jean (1604-86), 115.
Maistre, Joseph de, 327.
Malebranche, Nicolas (1638-1715), 279 and *note*, 514.
Malfilâtre, 519.
Malherbe, François de (1555-1628), 115, 241-251, 257, 283, 303.
Malory, Sir Thomas, 6, 155.
Mambrun, Pierre (1600-61), 266-268, 410.
Manière de Bien Penser dans les Ouvrages d'Esprit, 315, 316.

Manto, 24 *sq.*
Mantuan, 66.
Marinism and Marino, 331, 393, 414.
Marlowe, 205, 399.
Marmontel, Jean François (1723-99), 287 *note*, 525-529.
Marot, Clément (1497-1544), 110 *note*, 137, 281, 304.
Marryat, 34.
Martianus Capella, 42.
Martinus Scriblerus, 452.
Masson, Professor, 195 *note*.
Matamoros, Alfonso Guida, 336.
Maucroix, François de (1619-1708), 278.
Mayáns y Siscar, Gregorio (1699-1781), 333 *note*, 549.
Mazzone da Miglionico (*fl. c.* 1590), 107, 108.
Mazzoni (*fl. c.* 1550), 105.
Meditation on a Broomstick, 451.
Mémoire sur les Occupations de l'Académie Française, 305 *sq.*
Ménage, Gilles de (1613-92), 160, 273, 317, 321 *note*.
Ménagiana, 53 *note*, 273 *sq.*, 321 *note*.
Menéndez y Pelayo, Señor, 331-352, *passim*.
Mercure Galant, 316.
Meres, Francis (1565-1647), 187.
Merry Wives of Windsor, Dennis on, 434.
Mesa, Cristóbal de (1540-1620), 338 *note*, 346 *note*.
Meslier, le Curé (1678-1733), 515 *note*.
Metastasio (Pietro A. D. B. Trapassi), (1698-1782), 545, 546.
Mickle, 449.
Millar, Mr J. H., 486 *note*.
Milton, John (1608-74), 7, 45, 54, 56, 93, 262, 365, 398, 399, 402, 411 *note*, 435 *sq.*, 439, 443 *sq.*, 449, 467, 480 *sq.*, 516, 532, 555, 560.
"Minim, Dick," 484.
Minturno, Ant. Sebastiano (*fl. c.* 1560), 50-57, 90, 129 and *note*, 215, 219.
Miscellanies, Dryden's Preface to, 384 *sq.*
Mitford, W., 164 *note*.
Molière, 261, 273, 298, 303, 307, 322 *note*, 378 *sq.*, 521.
Molinet, Jean (*d.* 1507), 110.
Mondragon, Hieronimo de, 337 *note*.
Montagu, Mrs, 240.
Montagu (Lord Halifax), 439.
Montaigne, Michel de (1533-92), 138-142, 205, 232, 254, 279, 514.
Monte-Melone (Chiodino da), 329, 330.
Montesquieu, Charles de Sécondat, baron de la Brède, et de (1689-1755), 513, 514.
Monthly Review, the, 497.
Moratin, Nicolas Fernandez de (1737-80): to be distinguished from his son and successor in classicism, Leandro Fernandez de M., 1760-1828), 550.
More, Sir T., 63.
Morel-Fatio, M., 50 *note*, 332 *note*, 343 *note*, 346 *note*.
Morley, Prof. H., 162 *note*.
Morte d'Arthur, the, 155.
Mulcaster, Richard (1530?-1611), 209 *note*.
Mulgrave, John Sheffield, Earl of, later Duke of Buckinghamshire (1649-1721), 402.
"Mumpsimus," 15.
Muratori, Ludovico Antonio (1672-1750), 80 *note*, 324, 541, 542.
Musæus, 74.
Mutius, Macarius, 326.
Muzio, G. (*fl. c.* 1550), 46.

Nasarre y Ferriz, 549.
Naturaleza, 342 *sq.*
Naugerius sive de Poetica, 45, 214, 217.
Navagero, Andrea (Naugerius) (1483-1529), 45, 66, 81.
Nebrija, Antonio de (Nebrissensis) (*fl. c.* 1530), 336.
New World Discovered in the Moon, the, 198 *note*.
Nichols, Mr, 14 *note*, 15.
Nicolai, Christoph-Frederich (1733-1811), 551 *note*.
Nisard, D., 114.
Notes of Instruction, 162 *sq.*
Nueva Idea de la Tragedia Antigua, 341, 342.
Nutricia, 24 *sq.*

Obscuri Viri, the, 9.
Observateur Littéraire, 527.

Odyssey, the, 58, 267, 532.
Œdipus, the, 263.
Of Studies (Bacon's), 192.
Ogier, François (*fl. c.* 1630), 254-256, 259, 346, 347, 409.
Oldys, 457.
Olmucensis, Augustinus Moravus (Käsenbrot, *c.* 1500), 17 *note*, 27, 28, 218, 352 *note*.
Opera, Saint-Evremond on, 271.
Opitz, Martin (1597-1639), 17, 360-363, 556.
Orbecche, 58, 60.
Origenes de la Lengua Española, 333 *note*.
Origines de la Poésie Française, 101.
Orlando Furioso, 85, and see Ariosto.
Ossian, 464 *sq.*, 532.
Othello, Rymer on, 395.
Ovid, 384.

Panigarola, Francesco (1548-94), 329.
Paradise Lost, 325, 443 *sq.*
Paradossi, 29.
Paragone della Poesia Tragica, 554.
Parallel of Poetry and Painting, 385.
Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes, 321 *note*.
Parfai(c)t, François (1698-1733) and Claude (1701-77), 527.
Paris, M. Gaston, 110 *note*.
Parnassus, The English, 426 *note*.
Parrhasiana, 276, 277.
Partenio, B. (*fl. c.* 1560), 102, 103.
Pascal, Blaise (1623-62), 279 *note*.
Pasquier, Etienne (1529-1615), 135-138, 224 *note*, 232.
Pastor Fido, the, 107, 108.
Patin, Gui (1602-72), 272, 273, 316 *note*.
Patrizzi, Francesco (1529-97) [not to be confused with the Siennese Bp. of Gaeta, in the generation before, who wrote on politics, &c.], anti-Peripatetic philosopher and critic (half-title of Bk. IV.), 57, 61, 63, 90, 93, 94-102, 107, 215, 219, 230, 233, 320 *note*, 329, 413.
Patru, Olivier (1604-81), 277, 291.
Pazzi, Alessandro de (*fl. c.* 1530), 41.
Peacham, Henry (1576?-1643?), 187.
Pecock, Reginald (1395-1460), 151.
Pellegrino, C., 100.
Pel(l)etier, Jacques (1517-82), Pléiade poet and critic, 117-119.
Pel(l)etier, Jacques (*fl. c.* 1660), 17th cent. poet, 291.
Pellissier, M. Georges, 110 *note*, 129 *sq.*
Pellisson, Paul (1624-93), 273.
Peña, Don P. M., 339 *sq.*
Pensieri Diversi, Tassoni's, 326 *sq.*
Pepys, 377 *note*, 522.
Perceforest, 160.
Percy, 479.
Peri Bathous, 452.
Perrault, Charles (1628-1703), 285, 293, 321, 418, 419.
—— Claude (1613-88), 285.
—— Pierre (1608-80), 285.
"Person of Quality," the (who rewrote Spenser), 416 *note*, 561.
Petit de Julleville, M., 110 *note*.
Petrarch, 44 and *note*, 82, 199.
Petronius, 27, 201 *note*, 254 *note*, 284.
Phalaris, the Pseudo-, 24 *note*, 401, 402.
Phillips, Edward (1630-96), 398, 399.
Philological Enquiries, 473 *sq.*
Philosophia Rationalis, 330.
Philosophical Arrangements, 473.
Philosophy of Rhetoric, 470-473.
Piccolomini, Æneas Sylvius, see that name.
—— Alessandro (1508-78), 103, 104.
Pico della Mirandola (1463-94), 22, 23.
Pigna, Giovanbattista (*fl. c.* 1550), 58 *sq.*, 62, 63, 81, 84, 155, 214.
Pinciano, Alfonso López, called El. P. (150-?-160-?), 338-340.
Pitt, Christopher (1699-1748), 29 *sq.*
Plato, 6, 9, 38, 71, 82, 154, 213, 220, 514.
Pléiade, the, 110 *sq.* and Bk. IV., ch. iv., *passim*.
Plotinus, 9.
Plutarch, 22, 71, 99, 154.
Poemata Selecta Italorum, 29 *note*, 45 *note*.
Poetaster, the, 198.
Poetics (*Poetica*, *Poética*, *Poétique*), of Aristotle, 6 and *passim*.
—— of Daniello, 42-44.
—— of Denores, 105, 106.
—— of Luzán, 548.
—— of Scaliger, 69-80.
—— of Sibilet, 111, 112.
—— of Trissino, 38-41.
—— of Vida, 29-37.

Poetics of Viperano, 103.
Poetry and Logic, 20 *note*.
Poggio Bracciolino (1380-1459), 6 *note*.
Politian (Angelo Ambrogini, surnamed Poliziano) (1557-94), 15, 23-26, 66, 402, 455.
Polyeucte, 379.
Pomfret, John, 488, 495.
Pompée, 379.
Pontanus, J. (Spanmüller) (1542-1626), 353-356.
—— J. J., 66.
Poole, Joshua (*fl. c.* 1650), 426 *note*.
Pope, Alexander (1688-1744), 29 *note*, 45 *note*, 247, 413, 415, 421, 429, 432 *sq.*, 438 *note*, 452-461, 490 *sq.*, 561.
Possevino, Antonio (1534-1611), 325, 326.
Prælectiones Academicæ, Garbett's, 298 *note*, 372 *note*.
—— Keble's, 312 *note*, 372 *note*.
—— Trapp's, 462.
Pratique du Théâtre, 309, 310.
Principes de la Littérature, 522 *sq.*
Prior, 306, 415, 428, 429.
Promos and Cassandra, Preface to, 186 *note*.
Proposal for Correcting the English Tongue, 452.
Pucelle, La (Chapelain's), 257.
Puritan objection to Literature, the, 7, 10.
Puschmann, Adam (1532-1600), 360 *note*.
Puttenham, George (*fl. c.* 1580), 104, 182-186.

Quadrio, Francisco Xavier (1695-1756), 324, 542-545.
Quatre Poétiques, Les, 522.
Quevedo [y] Villegas, Francisco Gómez de (1580-1645), 339 *note*, 349.
Quintil Horatien, Le, 116 *sq.*
Quintilian, 6, 130, 151 *note*, 198 *sq.*, 455, 471 and *passim*.

Rabelais, François (1495-1553), 135, 141 *note*, 150, 304, 455, 516.
Racan, H. de Bueil, Marquis de (1589-1670), 242 *sq.*
Racine, Jean, 54, 290 *sq.*, 298, 504 *sq.*, 511, 522.
Racine, Louis (1692-1763), 511.
Ragguagli di Parnasso, 329-331.
Ralph, James (1605?-62), 430 *note*, 554 *note*.
Rambler, The, 480 *sq.*
Rambouillet, the Hôtel, 240.
Ramsay, Allan, 457.
—— Andrew Michael, (Chevalier) (1686-1743), 305, 544 *note*.
Rapin de Thoyras, P. (1661-1725), 247 *note*.
—— Nicolas (1535-1608), 247.
—— René (1621-87), 247 *note*, 310-314, 321 *note*.
—— Rymer's Preface to, 310 *note*, 392 *sq.*
Rappolt, 554.
Rasselas, 480 *sq.*
Recherches de la France, 135 *sq.*
Réflexions Critiques sur la Poésie et sur la Peinture, 510-513.
—— *Critiques sur quelques Poëtes*, 521.
—— Rapin's, 310 *sq.*
—— *sur la Critique*, 508.
—— *sur la Poésie*, 510, 511.
—— *sur la Poétique*, 310.
—— *sur Longin*, 292 *sq.*
Regnier, Mathurin (1573-1613), 242-251, 284.
Regulus, Sebastian, 554.
Rehearsal, The, 415 *note*.
Relapse, The, Collier on, 463.
Religio Medici, G. Patin on, 272.
Remarks on Italy, 439.
—— *on the Rape of the Lock*, 435.
Rémond de Saint-Mard, see Saint-Mard.
Renaissance, the term, 4 *note*.
Rengifo, Juan Diaz *or* Diego Garcia [they were brothers: the book appeared under the name of the first, and is now attributed to the second], 337, 338.
Return from Parnassus, 97 *note*.
Reulis and Cautelis, K. James's, 176 *sq.*
Riccio, Bartolommeo, 81.
—— Pietro, see Crinitus.
Riccoboni, Antonio (1541-99), 50 *note*.
Rigault, M. H., 240 *note*, 388 *note*, 502.
Rime Diverse, 46.
Rinaldini, Carlo (*fl. c.* 1680), 330.
Rival Ladies, Preface to, 374.
Rivarol, Antoine, Comte (?) de (1753-1801), 534, 535.

Robortello, Francesco (1516-67), 41, 42, 49 *note*, 50, 345.
Rodogune, 263.
Rollin, Charles (1661-1741), 509.
Rollo (B. and F.'s), Rymer on, 394.
Roman de la Rose, 160 *note*.
Roman Bourgeois, 553 *note*.
Romanzi, the critical dispute on, 55 *sq*.
Romeo and Juliet,
Ronsard, Pierre de (1524-85), 63, 119-126, 137, 162 *note*, 222, 223, 233, 244 *note*, 257 *note*, 258, 264, 304, 307, 313, 362.
Roscommon, W. Dillon, Earl of, (1633-85), 404, 439.
Rousseau, J. B., 522.
—— J. J., 518.
Rücktaschel, Herr, 110 *note*, 127.
Ruskin, Mr, 496.
Rusticus, 24 *sq*.
Rymer, Thomas (1646-1713), 357, 391-397, 405, 432 *sq*., 571.

Sadolet, 455.
Saint-Amant, M. A. de (1594-1661), 257, 297.
Saint-Evremond, Ch. de M. de Saint-Denis, Seigneur de (1610-1703), 241, 268-272, 502.
Saint-Louis, 505.
Saint-Mard, Rémond de (sometimes incorrectly called Raymond de Saint-Marc) (1682-1757), 510, 511.
Sainte-Beuve, 219, 257, 277 *note*, 278 *note*, 280, 320.
Sainte-Palaye, 569.
Salisbury, John of, 8.
Sallust, Cheke on, 152.
Salviati, Leonardo (1540-89), 41 *note*, 81 *note*, 91, 92, 103 *note*, 328.
Sanchez, Alfonso, 346.
—— Francisco, "El Brocense" (1523-1601), 336.
—— T. Antonio (1732-98), 550, 569.
Sannazaro, Jacopo (1458-1530), 51, 173, 174.
Santillana, Iñigo López de Mendoza, Marquis of (1398-1458), 333, 334.
Sarrasin, J. (1605-54), 260, 265 *sq*.
Savonarola, Girolamo (1452-98), 20-23, 173, 213.
Scaliger, Joseph Justus (1540-1609), 276.
—— Julius Cæsar (1484-1558), 8, 12, 17, 42, 57, 69-80, 96 *note*, 215, 219, 233, 241 *note*, 267, 355, 375, 405.
Scaligerana, 276.
Schélandre, Jean de (1585-1635), 255.
Schelling, Prof., 144 *note*, 200 *note* and *sq*.
Schoolmaster, The, 152 *sq*.
School of Abuse, the, 169-171.
Schosser, 353 *note*.
Science et Asnerye, 13.
Scott, John, of Amwell (1739-83), 499, 500.
—— Professor, 519 *note*.
—— Sir Walter, 88, 502.
Scudéry, Georges de (1601-67), 256, 258, 265 *sq*.
Seconde Rhétorique, 110.
Secundus, see Johannes.
Sedley, Sir C., 376 *sq*.
Seebohm, Mr, 15, 22.
Segni, 42.
Selecta Poemata Italorum, 29 *note*, 45 *note*, 454 *note*.
Seneca (L. Annæus ?), the tragedian, 60, 61, 342, 433.
Sentiments du Curé Meslier, 515 *note*.
Servois, M., 303.
Sévigné, Marie de Rabutin-Chantal, Marquise de (1626-96), 241, 273, 274.
Shadwell, 271.
Shaftesbury, 22 *note*, 514.
Shakespeare, 177, 199 *sq*., 206 *sq*., 228 *note*, 262, 375, 378 *sq*., 393 *sq*., 399, 409 *note*, 434 *sq*., 454, 464, 480 *sq*., 485 *sq*., 516, 532, 560.
—— Johnson's *Preface to*, 480 *sq*.,
—— Pope's *Preface to*, 453, 454.
Shelley, 87, 426.
Shenstone, 478.
Shepherd's Kalendar, 173.
Sheringham, Robert (1602-78), 392 *note*.
Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage, A, 402-404.
Short View of Tragedy, A, 392 *sq*.
Sibilet, Thomas (1512-89), 111, 112.
Sidney, Sir Philip (1554-86), 7, 43, 45, 171-176, 199, 226 *sq*., 262, 348, 375, 409.
Siècle de Louis Quatorze, 516.
Silent Woman, The, 380.
Silius Italicus, 59.

Simylus, 203 *note*.
Smart, Christopher, 562.
Smith, Adam, 462.
—— Mr Gregory, 27, 144 *note*, 426 *note*, 442 *note*, 510 *note*.
—— Mr Nichol, 281 *note*.
Sofonisba, 38.
Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg, 327.
Somnium Scipionis, 22 *note*.
Spanmüller, see Pontanus, J.
Spence, Joseph (1698-1768), 332, 415, 438 *note*, 454, 455.
Spenser, Edmund (1552-99), 165-169, 201 *sq.*, 264, 369, 393, 399, 416, 438-448, 482 *sq.*
Spenser Redivivus, 416, 561.
Speroni, Speron(e), (1500-88), 55 *note*.
Spingarn, Mr Joel Elias, 3 *note*, and Bk. IV. *passim*.
Sprat, Thomas, Bishop of Rochester (1635-1713), 398, 405, 456.
Stanyhurst, 167 *note*.
Statius, 58, 59.
Steele, Sir Richard (1672-1729), 448.
Sterne, 205, 517.
Strabo, 22 and *note*, 361.
Sturm, Johann (1507-89), 153 *sq.* *notes*, 319, 353, 356.
Suard, Jean Baptiste Antoine (1733-1817), 529.
Suckling, 463.
Summo, Faustino (*fl. c.* 1600), 108, 218, 219.
Sur la Lecture des Vieux Romans, 258, 260.
Sur les Héros de Roman, 292.
Surrey, Earl of (1517?-47), 159 *sq.*
Swift, Jonathan (1667-1745), 320, 449-452, 517.
Swinburne, Mr, 426 *note*.
Sylvæ (Politian's), 23-26.
Symonds, Mr J. A., 25 *note*.
Syphilis, 44 *note*, 99.

Tale of a Tub, A, 451.
Tallemant des Réaux Gédéon (1619-92), 242 *note*, 273.
Tamburlaine, 97 *note*.
Tanneguy le Fèvre, 321 *note*, 405.
Tasso, Bernardo (1493-1569), 47, 90.
—— Torquato (1544-95), 47, 56, 89-94, 100, 219, 220, 233, 264, 278 *note*, 324, 369, 393, 516.
Tassoni, Alessandro (1565-1635), 326-328, 417, 418.
Taste of the Town, the, 554.
Tatler, the, 439 *sq.*, 450.
Taylor (the Water-Poet), 201 *note*.
Temora, 464.
Temple, Sir William (1628-99), 401, 438 *note*, 450.
Tennyson, 34, 262 *note*, 485.
Terence, 303.
Tertullian, 17, 279.
Texte, M., 528 *note*.
Thackeray, 77.
Théâtre des Grecs, 509.
Theatrum Poetarum, 398, 399.
Theobald, 198 *note*.
Théophile (de Viau), 291, 297, 303.
Thomas, Antoine Léonard (1732-85), 529.
—— Mr P. G., 18 *note*.
Thomson, 478.
Ticknor, 332 *note*, 335 *note*.
Tiraboschi, Jeronimo (1731-70), 545.
Tirso de Molina (Gabriel Tellez) (1585-1648), 332, 342, 343.
Tolomei, 46.
Tomitano, 47.
Topica Poetica, 104.
Tory, Geoffroy (1480-1533), 110, 135, 150.
Toxophilus, 153 *sq.*
Tragedies of the Last Age, the, 392 *sq.*
Traill, Mr, 504.
Traité de la Construction Oratoire, 522-524.
—— *des Etudes*, 509.
—— *du Poème Epique*, 308-310.
Trapp, Joseph (1679-1747), 462.
Trimerone, 100.
Trissino, Gian-Giorgio (1478-1550), 38-41, 64.
Tritical Essay, A, 451.
Turia, Ricardo de[l] = Luis Ferrer de Cardona or Pedro Juan de Rejaule? see Morel-Fatio, *op. cit.* (*fl. c.* 1616), 346, 347.
Tyr et Sidon, 255.
Tyrius, Maximus, 22, 43.

Underhill, Mr, 406 *note*, 454 *note*.
Unities, the Three, Books IV. and V. *passim*. See especially Scaliger, Castelvetro, Corneille, Ogier, Dryden, Johnson.
"Unity of Interest," 508.
Usefulness of the Stage, the, 433.

"Vadius," 273.
Valdeflores, the Marquis of, 549.
Valdés, Juan de (1500-44), 335.
Valesiana (written by Valois, Charles de (1671-1747), on his father Adrien), 275.
Vanbrugh, 403.
Varchi, Benedetto (1502-65), 49.
Varro, 70.
Vaugelas, C. F. de (1585-1650), 240 *sq.*, 257.
Vaughan, Sir W. (1577-1648), 187.
Vauquelin de la Fresnaye, Jean (1535-1607), 128-134, 196, 220, 222, 223, 246, 278 *note*.
Vauvenargues, Luc de Clapiers, Marquis de (1715-47), 521, 522.
Vavasseur, François, 254 *note*.
Vegius, M., 66.
Venice Preserved,
Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst, 552 *sq.*
Vettori, Pietro = Petrus Victorius (*fl. c.* 1560), 41 *sq.*
Viaje del Parnaso, 347.
Vida, Marco Girolamo, Bishop of Alba (1480-1546), 26, 29-37, 66, 68, 70, 129 and *note*, 203, 213, 455 *sq.*
Vie de Corneille, Fontenelle's, 505.
Vigneul-Marville, 275.
Villena, Enrique de (1384-1434), 333.
Villon, François (*fl. c.* 1460), 110 *note*, 281.
Viperano (*fl. c.* 1580), 103, 128, 341.
Virgil, 24-26, 30-35, 47, 52 *sq.*, 74-78, 86, 122-126, 131, 139, 140, 310 *sq.*, 415, 482.
—— Dryden's Preface to, 385.
Visé or Vizé, Jean Donneau de (1640-1710), 316 *note*.
Vittorino da Feltre, 18.
Vives, Juan Luis (1492-1540), 336, 356.
Vogelweide, Walther von der, 361.
Voiture, Vincent (1598-1648), 246.
Voltaire, François Arouet de (1694-1778), 287 *note*, 317, 513-518, 556.
Voss, Gerard J. (1577-1649), 267, 356-360.

Wallace, Mr A. R., 532 *note*.
Waller, 271, 322, 375 sq., 439, 449.
Walpole, Horace, 479.
Warton, Joseph, 321 *note*,
—— Thomas, 179 *note*, 479.
Watson, James (King's printer in Scotland, 1711-22), 457.
—— John (correspondent of Erasmus and Master of Christ's), 14.
—— Thomas, Bishop of Lincoln, 161.
Webbe, William (*fl. c.* 1580), 178-182.
Webster, John, 187.
Welsted, Leonard (1688-1742), 430, 431.
Wesley, Ch., 87.
—— Samuel, 406.
West, Gilbert, 482 *note*.
Whately, 98, 470.
Whetstone, George (*fl. c.* 1580), 186 *note*.
Wie weit sich der Nutzen der Regeln in d. Beredsamkeit und Poesie erstrecke, 557.
Wild, 377.
Wilson, [Sir] Thomas (?-1581), 148-151.
Winchelsea, Lady, 421, 478, 485.
Winstanley, William (1628?-90?), 399, 400.
Wither, 377, 399.
Woodward, Mr, 18 *note*.
Wordsworth, 72 *note*, 202.
Works of the Learned, the, 406 *note*.
Worsfold, Mr, 195 *note*, 437 *sq.*
Wotke, Herr, 63 *note*.
Wotton, 450.
Wyatt, Sir Thomas (1503-42), 63, 159 *sq.*
Wycherley, 543.

Xenophon, 59.

Yalden, 495.

Zabarella (Professor of Philosophy in latter half of 16th century; not to be confused with the scholastic Cardinal 150 years earlier), 50 *note*.
Zénobie, 309.
Zinano, Gabriele (*fl. c.* 1590), 106, 107
Zoilus, 397.
Zürichers, the, 554 *sq.*

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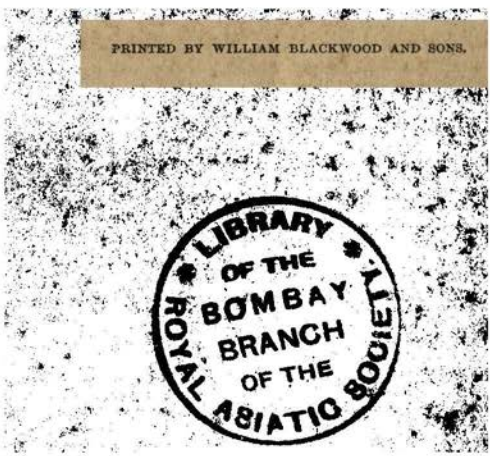

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